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The Collected Works of
Arthur Symons

Volume I

Poems

Printed in Great Britain.
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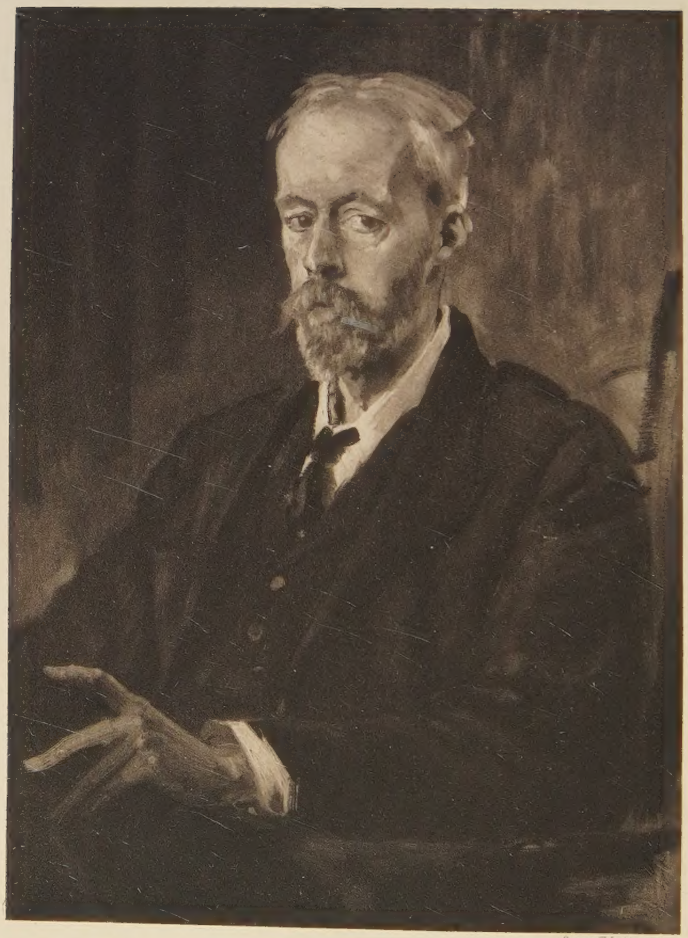

Emery Walker ph. sc.

Arthur Symons

from the painting by Augustus John A.R.A

Poems: Volume One

by Arthur Symons

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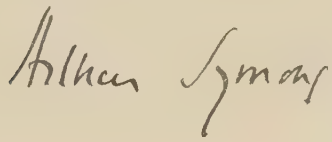
London: Martin Secker

One hundred numbered sets of this Collected Edition have been prepared for sale in England and the United States of America, the first volume bearing the Author's signature. This is No. 48



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DAYS AND NIGHTS

TO

WALTER PATER

IN ALL GRATITUDE
AND ADMIRATION

PROLOGUE

Art lives, they say, withdrawn on some far peak,
The home of clouds, the sanctuary of stars ;
She hearkens, and the ancient heavens speak,
She sees strange lands beyond the sunset bars.

The winds commune with her, she hears the voice
Of waters, and she hears, as one who dreams,
The cry of men who suffer and rejoice
Beyond the boundaries of her utmost streams.

Brooding aloft, she reigns a lonely queen,
Nor aught of earth nor aught of man would know,
Impassible, inexorably serene,
Cold as the morning on her hills of snow.

So say they, blindest leaders of the blind,
Bending before a phantom fancy-bred :
Draw back the curtain—there is nought behind ;
The godhead from the empty shrine is fled.

Seek her not there ; but go where cities pour
Their turbid human stream through street and mart,
A dark stream flowing onward evermore
Down to an unknown ocean ;—there is Art.

She ſtands amidſt the tumult, and is calm
She reads the hearts self-closed againſt the light ;
She probes an ancient wound, yet brings no balm ;
She is ruthless, yet she doeth all things right.

She looks on princes in their palaces,
She peers upon the prisoner in his cell ;
She sees the saint who prays to God, she sees
The way of those that go down quick to hell.

With equal feet she treads an equal path,
Nor recks the goings of the sons of men ;
She hath for sin no scorn, for wrong no wrath,
No praise for virtue, and no tears for pain.

All serve alike her purpose ; she requires
The very life-blood of humanity ;
All that the soul conceives, the heart desires,
She marks, she garners in her memory.

At times she hears from meadows inward borne
The bleat of sheep, the chirrup of the birds ;
Wild airs blown on her from the freshening morn
Waken her song to unaccuſtomed words.

Then is she glad ; then brief idyllic notes
Sound through her sadder ſtrains ; they sound not long.
The gladness ceases as the echo floats
Back to its meadows : sadder grows the song.

Prologue

The winter of the world is in her soul,
The pity of the little lives we lead,
And the long slumber and the certain goal,
And after us our own rebellious seed.

Therefore the notes are blended in her breath,
And nights and days one equal song unites ;
Yet, since of man with trouble born to death
She sings, her song is less of Days than Nights.

October 20, 1887.

RED BREDBURY'S END

I

"JOE," the old man maundered, as he lay his length in the bed,
"Joe, God bless you, my son, but your dad's no better than dead.
Eh, I'm a powerful sinner, and I thank the Lord for the same,
But, Joe, I'm dying, I tell you! Joe, Joe, and I can't die game."

II

"Ay, old man," said the son, "die game, or die like a rat:
If you choose to sneak into heaven, I see no harm in that."
"But the parson, Joe, for pity——" The son leaned forth from his chair,
And the old man shrank and whimpered and shuddered away from his stare.

III

It was night, and the wind blew loud and the rain swept over the moor,
And once and again a branch tap-tapped like a hand at the door.

The fire leaped, flickered and fell, and a candle guttered
and winked;
And the old man peered at the light till his eyelids reddened
and blinked.

IV

"Joe," he quavered again, "'twas cunning, eh, my son?
We stopped the mouths of the rogues, and we fought the
law, and we won.
But I tell you, here as I lie, I can see those corpses stand,
With a tongue in every wound, all bloody at God's right
hand.

V

"I can't die yet! I can't! Oh mercy! I'll tell, I'll tell!
Quick, fetch me a parson, Joe, and save my soul out of
hell!"
The old man stopped, for his breath came short, and the
light grew dim;
Then he shrieked, "I'm going to God, and I *must* get right
with Him!"

VI

"Dad," said the son, "lie still; die easy; let bygones be.
Now your own neck's free of the noose, you shall tell no
tales of me.
We've kept our counsel together: get right with God if
you will:
God tells no tales, but the parson's a man: and I say, lie
still!"

VII

Then the whole pent rage and remorse of the old man burst
in a cry,
And he bounded up in the bed, and he flung up his arms
on high;
His clenched fists beat at the air: then he doubled and fell
on the bed,
And his eyes were a fear to see: they lived: but the man
was dead.

May 17, 18, 1887.

A REVENGE

I SAID, " This ends our treaty. We have been
Husband and wife thus long, and I have seen
No fault in you, nor given you cause of wrong.
I wake. You have perchance deceived me long.
(Pardon! I do not ask.) Nor do I say
One word of blame, or raise my voice to-day.
Simply, all ends. But yet, since you and I
Find no convenient sudden way to die,
I guard you, not your husband, not your foe,
A gaoler merely, till you please to go
The way all flesh must follow even as we."

Thus far I spoke, calmly as now, when she,
Hiding her face, broke into bitter cries.
I looked upon her with indifferent eyes.
Then I resumed, " We leave this house ere night.
Be ready. Take your jewels, yours by right,
As is this watch." I raised it. It was his.

The beauty of a faithless woman is,
To some—I pity such—still beautiful,
A fever of the flesh that will not cool,
A poison in the blood, a rankling thorn.
I may declare that since that fatal morn
Her beauty was to me, though beauty still,
Indifferent, mine no longer, and no thrill
Disturbed the execution of my task.

She lived three years. Nay, surely you may ask!
But have I more to tell? A château-grave,
A ruinous pile, in woods so dense, they gave
No traces to the heedless traveller,
Closed in upon us: there I lived with her.
"Since words are vain," I said, "vain words lay by:
I will not speak to you until you die."
Nor did I utter any word. She wept,
Raved, prayed, defied, entreated, but I kept
Eternal silence. Day by day she came:
Now it was, "I repent me of my shame;"
Now, "I have sinned, and that was heaven; 'tis well,
For you have turned on me the keys of hell;"
Now, "But one word—speak—any word—but speak!"
And she would sob till tears had left her weak,
And look upon me with her panting eyes,
And cling about my feet. I, being wise,
Made answer none at all, knowing my worth;
But, if she waxed unbearable, drew forth
His watch, and froze the fountain of her tears.

Three years went round, and she was dead. Three years
I watched her beauty wither, and her life
Ebb, a slow stream. She, seeing how vain was strife,
Desisted, learning wisdom thus, though late.
Each waited. I was patient and could wait,
Since when Death came, he came to her a friend.
He came at length. I stood, knowing the end,
As her breath gasped, more faintly, to get free.
Even then I did not speak, but silently

That last time I drew forth the watch. And lo,
She rose, she caught it, all her face one glow,
And clasped it to her breast, and smiled again,
And died.
So my revenge had been in vain.

September 29, 1887.

A CAFÉ-SINGER

I

Mother, I cannot breathe: the room swims, stifles me;
Give me a little air!
O that the night were over! Good God, let me see
Another sunrise Thou!

Mother, you will not go—to-night—to dance and sing?
Oh, I must have you by!
They will not mind, mother, it is a little thing.
Do, wait until I die.

—Child, do you think they care, *they* care if the heart breaks,
Unless the voice breaks too?
Do you think they'd lose one laugh one minute for our sakes,
Because of you and me?

My girl, it breaks my heart. Good-bye. I go. They wait.
These spangles—are they right?
Stay, one more dab of rouge. And if I come too late,
Good-bye, my dear, good-night.

II

—My daughter, not too late, say, not too late. I flew
As a lost soul might fly
Out of the flames of hell. I have come back to you
—In time—to see me die.

—But were you lonely, child?—Oh, lonely as the tomb
I shuddered in the night.
O how the shadows stalked and crept about the room!
Now, mother, all is right.

—I had to leave you, child. I've come. The agony
I had, I too!—Farewell.
Don't sob like that, Mother! I—— —Don't die yet, Marie!
The priest—God—heaven and hell——

I don't know—some folks do—— —The good God, He'll be kind—
I hope so—by and by.
One kiss more, Mother dear. We can't pray. Never mind!
He'll understand. Good-bye!

September 24, 1884.

Shed, sinful flesh, these tears of blood,
For all thy vileness all too few;
Wash out, O holy healing flood,
The sins that alway in God's view
Stand as a mountain day and night,
A mountain growing up from hell;
Smite, deluge of my torments, smite
Upon the burrowing base, and swell
Up, upward to the very brow.
Shall God no mercy have for me
When thou art shaken, even thou,
Hurled down and cast into the sea?
No mercy? Yea, doth God require
These cruel pangs, and all in vain
To save me from the flaming fire?
Shall all my blood pour forth like rain,
Nor fructify the barren sod,
Nor cleanse my scarlet sins like wool,
Nor turn the burning wrath of God?
Lo, all these years my hours are full
Of sorer suffering than of old
His martyrs bore, that triumphed still,
Gained grace, and heard the harps of gold
And saw the city on the hill.
I have not tasted flesh, nor fed
On dainty fare, nor known the touch
Of joyous wine, nor bitten bread,
Save mouldy, and of that not much,
Sour crusts, with water old and stale,
And herbs and roots; no rest I take

Save when these vile limbs faint and fail,
But roaming all the night awake
I think on my exceeding sin.
God knows I take no rest at all,
Who haply, resting not, shall win
The final goal before I fall.
Yea, and not these alone ; yea, these
Might all men do for heaven ; but I,
In suns that scorch, in moons that freeze,
About my shuddering shoulders ply
This biting scourge of knotted cord,
And shout to feel the blood run down.
Wilt Thou not think on this, dear Lord ?
Yea, when the jewels of Thy crown
Thou countest up remembering,
Wilt Thou not, Lord, remember this,
That is not, Lord, a little thing,
And let me see Thy heaven of bliss ?
O Lord, my Love, my Life, my Love,
I swoon in ecstasy divine ;
Take, take my blood and drink thereof,
A drink-offering of costly wine
Poured out into a sacred cup ;
Take, take my blood poured freely out
And drain the winepress' fruitage up.
O Lord, I parch with burning drought,
I, whom the streams may not refresh ;
Give me, my Lord, my Love, give me
Thy spirit, as I give my flesh
A living sacrifice to Thee.

February 14, 1886.

A VILLAGE MARIANA

The warm long days of summer slipt away,
Then, as the sun grew paler, creeping Time
Led in the autumn, and the winter came
With watery noons that shook an angry torch
At sunset, and the winter, unawares,
Slid into spring. Then the blithe baby spring,
A petulant little one full of smiles and tears,
Grew from the tiny stature of a child
To womanhood, and so was summer. Thus
The eternal seasons circled in their course.

For her, she too had duties; being poor
She could not sit and nurse her new-born grief,
A babe that idler mothers love; by day
Her hands were busy in her father's house,
All the day through—that day's-work never done,
For still the endless loom was waiting, still
Pointing to work and ever work ahead.
Yet, as the shuttle shifted, and her hands
Plied in and out among the shifting threads,
She would lift up her eyes, and through the panes
(Glazed with white paper in a pane or two)
Would see her lover stepping suddenly
Out of the great long unseen road beyond,
Into the square of light before her: now,
Now he is fingering with the latch; he flings
The door wide, sunlight splashes all the floor.

And he is there with light about his face.
So, with that light upon him, he would come
To see her in her day-dreams ; dreams, at first,
That left the shadow lighter in their wake.
When the girls came about her, peeping in,
(Still as she worked) chatting, and asking her,
" What of your lad ? " laughing ; she answered them,
Finding it easy to keep back the tears,
" He's gone to London, walking all the way,
But he'll come back by railroad ; he'll come back
Rich, as he means to be, and marry me."
And when the girls laughed, nodded and looked wise,
And said, " Oh, Marian, when the lads get rich,
They don't come back ; they never come back then.
They marry a grand lady who wears gloves ;
They don't come back to us ; " she looked at them,
Proudly, a little fiercely : " Not my lad ! "

When the first letter came, spelt cautiously
Although the writing staggered, all that day
A light was in her eye, she drew great breaths,
As of a tonic air to one long sick,
And little smiles would come about her lips
At unawares. She knew the words by heart
From the first reading, but her hands would pause,
Dropping the shuttle while she opened out
The crumpled sheet again, and yet again,
Till, crying at herself for idleness,
She looked at it no more ; only still said
The words beneath her breath. When friends came in,
She read them from the letter how he went,

And how he came to London, and was now ;
Holding the sheet before her, being ashamed
To seem to know it (where else ?) in her heart.
But other parts she did not read to them,
Words written for herself alone. She smiled
When the girls said, " But, Marian, what else ?
Your letter's longer than you read to us ! "
Smiled the calm happy smile of one that has
A lover who sends lovers' messages.

And when the girls said, " All the lads at first
Write letters to you and remember you ;
But wait a bit : he'll drop off like the rest ; "
She, as one does when atheists gibe at God,
Said nothing, only smiled, being content.

So letters came, and she sent letters back,
Twice the length, very much the better writ
(Had not the parson praised her copy-book ?
" What ? " to her father, " this your wench's hand ? "),
Telling him simply all the simple news.

And so seasons changed, and changed again,
Changing for ever, evermore the same,
Indifferent to the little lives of men.
At length he writes more seldom : " press of work :
To-day moved up ; more wages, more to do,
And harder ; but write always when you can,
Marian, you know I love to hear from you."
She noticed, first with pride and then with dread,
How good his writing comes to be ; and now

Her pretty village hand seems mean and coarse,
Nothing to pride herself on any more,
Nothing that he will care to see. She wept
A few salt tears, as children when a toy
Seems good no longer ; brushed them off, and dropt
That little innocent vanity.

Time passed.
The girls said, " Marian's paler than she was :
Does she get any letters now ? " One said,
" I went her way, about the stroke of twelve,
Yesterday morning : just outside the door
I met the post—mother's away, you know—
He gave me mother's letter. In a haste
(I had some message) I undid the door,
And bounced in with the letter in my hand.
There was our Marian, not a step away,
Holding her hand out, with the queerest look,
All of a tremble. ' Oh, it's mine,' I said ;
She flushed and stammered something. I believe
He doesn't write her : she writes him, I know."
" Just as we thought ! " they said.

So Marian worked,
Minding the house, and weaving at the loom,
While the eternal seasons came and went.

Doubtless she suffered. As the time went by,
Tidingless time, her face began to dwine ;
Angles came out where the firm flesh sank in,
Her eyes looked larger, underlined with black.

Sometimes, at night, she did not sleep. She lay
Staring across against the white low wall,
There was an aching trouble, on her brain
The whiter for the moonlight. In her heart
A weight, a vague weight pressing heavily,
That would not let her sleep. Sometimes, at night,
She slept a sleep broken by ominous dreams :
How she was falling, falling down a pit,
A great black slimy pit, and as she fell
She saw him there beside her, and he laughed
And would not catch her ; and she fell, and found
That it was London, and she walked at dusk
Along a certain street, and as she walked
Two people passed her, going arm in arm,
A lady all in silks, a man with her
Wearing a tall hat, and they came so close
She slipt into the gutter ; and looking up
She knew her lover.
Still at times she wrote,
Piteous letters, not reproaching him,
" But oh, dear John," she begged, " one word to say
If you are happy—rich—too rich for me—
To say if you don't love me any more.
I love you always." But no letter came.

At last, one day, the old grey schoolmaster,
A man of books and thoughts, who had from town
A Radical paper daily ; kind he was,
With brains behind his spectacles, but eyes
For printed matter only ; coming by,
Looked in and nodded in his pleasant way

A Village Mariana

To Marian as she sat with listless hands
Passing the shuttle, and " My dear," he said,
" You used, I think, to know John—what's his name ?
Here, see it on the paper ; see, it tells
He's married to—who is it ? Clara—what ?
Well, a good marriage, I should say, fair, fair,
'Tis a good part of London, fairly good,
A very decent part—the bride's ; well, well,
I always said young John would make his mark.
Come, then, let's have the paper." So she gave
The paper back into his hands, and then,
He being gone, she shut the door and turned
Back to her seat and groped and clutched at it
And found it and sat down, and in her hands
She took the shuttle, but her feet forgot
To work both treadles, so the shuttle passed
Twisting and tangling the disordered threads,
And so slipt through her nerveless hands, and fell
Soiling the delicate silk. At that she turned
Her face away from the great senseless loom,
Away from the blank window, and never more
A messenger of joy ; and slipping down,
Flung both her arms across the chair, and put
Her face between them : and God knows, not I,
Whether she wept or had no strength for tears.

January 31, 1888.

NIGHT AND WIND

The night is light and chill,
Stars are awake in the sky,
There's a cloud over the moon;
Round the house on the hill
The wind creeps with its cry
Between a wail and a croon.

I hear the voice of the wind,
The voice of the wind in the night,
Cry and sob and weep,
As the voice of one that hath sinned
Moaning aloud in its might
In the night when he cannot sleep.

Sleep! No sleep is about.
What remembering sin
Wakes and watches apart?
The wind wails without,
And my heart is wailing within,
And the wind is the voice of my heart.

February 7, 1886.

THE FISHER'S WIDOW

The boats go out and the boats come in
Under the wintry sky ;
And the rain and foam are white in the wind,
And the white gulls cry.

She sees the sea when the wind is wild
Swept by the windy rain ;
And her heart's a-weary of sea and land
As the long days wane.

She sees the torn sails fly in the foam,
Broad on the skyline grey ;
And the boats go out and the boats come in,
But there's one away.

October 5, 1886.

SOROR TUA

For the ſtatue of Lorenzetti in the Venetian Exhibition, 1887, repreſenting a chained and recumbent figure larger than life; who, if ſhe broke the ſilence of her miſery, might ſpeak thus:

Ye that pass by, come near and look on me;
I am deſpiſed, rejected and out-thruſt:
My garments are acquainted with the duſt,
My ſoul is boſom mate of miſery.

Come near and look upon me, ſons of men.
Would I were dead; yea, peace is with the dead.
The dead are happy, having no deſire.
I riſe and fall, and riſe and fall again,
Something is in me, famiſhing for bread,
Baffled and unappeaſable as fire.
Woe, woe is me, I tire and may not tire!
Eternal ſtrength in weariness is mine.
Raiſe me, I call. Come nearer, I am thine.
What? Knoweſt thou not thy ſiſter? I am ſhe.

Auguſt 26, 1887.

MARGERY OF THE FENS

I

Yes, I'm dying by inches ; the Devil has got his way :
I fought him fourscore years, but he's gripped me hard to-day.
No, not God, not a word of God ! For I let Him be.
The Devil is waiting, I tell you, but God has forgotten me.

II

Sir, you know I'm a witch ? Look here, lean closer down :
If you tossed me into the dyke, you know I couldn't drown ;
If you pricked me over with pins, I never could feel a pin ;
For the Devil has sealed me his, and I've sinned the Original Sin.

III

Fourscore years have I lived, here in the heart of the Fens.
Dragging ages of years, but fourscore years of men's ;
And the pools'll stir, and the fogs'll rise, and the winds'll moan ;—
Ay, there were others along with me, once ; but they're gone, they're gone.

IV

Ages of years alone ! There was Dickon, my man, he died,
And the child didn't die, but her father was on the Almighty's side.

And He took him away to Himself; but He left the girl to hell,
And me He left to the Devil, with hardly a soul to sell.

V

Cursed and motherless girl, motherless girl that was mine!
I brought her up on my knees, and she left 'em to herd with swine;
I never have named her name these twoscore years save three:
She cast me off to be harlot, and I cast her off from me.

VI

What's that crying and wailing? The wind? Oh, ay, the wind.
And the wages of sin is death, and the soul shall die that hath sinned.
She cast me off, and she came back home with her baby again;
And I spoke no word, and I shut the door in her face in the rain.

VII

And the baby wailed and wailed on the threshold out in the night;
And all night long she lay at the door, and I sat upright;
And at morn she rose, and I spoke no word, and she went her way;
And the wages of sin is death, and it's I must die to-day.

VIII

Inch by inch I'm dying, and Satan's at watch hard by,
For he'll have my soul—it was all I had—when I come to die;
For my man that was he died, and my girl that was she fell,
And I flung my soul away, and the Devil caught it for hell.

IX

Twoscore years save three I've lived the life of a witch
And I've plagued the cattle and folk with cramp and murrain and stitch;
And I've sold my soul, for my girl she killed my heart: let be;
She cast me off to be harlot, and I cast her off from me.

X

Go, and leave me alone. I'm past your help. I shall lie
As she lay, through the night, and at morn, as she went in the rain, I shall die.
Go, and leave me alone. Let me die as I lived. But oh,
If the wind wouldn't cry and wail with the baby's cry as I go!

October 6, 1886.

THE TEMPTATION OF SAINT ANTHONY

(After a Design by Félicien Rops)

The Cross, the Cross is tainted! O most Just,
Be merciful, and save me from this snare.
The Tempter lures me as I bend in prayer
Before the sacred symbol of our Trust.
Yea, the most Holy of Holies feeds my lust,
The body of thy Christ; for, unaware,
Even as I kneel and pray, lo, She is there,
The temptress, she the wanton; and she hath thrust
The Christ's bruised body off, and all her own,
Shameless, she stretches on the cross, arms wide,
Limbs pendent, in libidinous mockery.
She draws mine eyes to hers—ah, sin unknown!
She smiles, she triumphs; but the Crucified
Falls off into the darkness with a cry.

October 30, 1887.

OF CHARITY

A BEGGAR died last night; his soul
Went up to God, and said:
"I come uncalled, forgive it, Lord;
I died for want of bread."

Then answered him the Lord of heaven:
"Son, how can this thing be?
Are not My saints on earth? and they
Had surely succoured thee."

"Thy saints, O Lord," the beggar said,
"Live holy lives of prayer;
How should they know of such as we?
We perish unaware.

"They strive to save our wicked souls
And fit them for the sky;
Meanwhile, not having bread to eat,
(Forgive!) our bodies die."

Then the Lord God spake out of heaven
In wrath and angry pain:
"O men, for whom My Son hath died,
My Son hath lived in vain!"

October 30, 1887.

WOOD-NOTES

A PASTORAL INTERLUDE

I. A WOOD

Come into the close shadow of the wood.
Here is cool quiet born of solitude,
Cool leafy caverns, murmurous as the sea's,
When a breath blows across them. Here are these
Lone alleys to the flitting footfalls known
Of nymphs that haunt the silences alone;
Divinest leisure, large as heaven or morn;
Deep thoughtfulness, of all the ages born
Whose shadows slumber in the central shade;
Quiet delight; a pensive pleasure made
By that sweet sense of slumber that still leaves
A far-off air about the vacant leaves,
An air as of some palace walls that seem
To rise and sway in a remembered dream.

May 11, 1885.

II. THE WOOD-NYMPH

(After a picture by Burne-Jones)

The green leaves, ah, the green leaves cover me :
Would I might lose this unloved human life
And share the happy being of the leaves !
For lo, they live and grow and drink the sun
And sip the nectar of the heavenly showers
And have no sorrow with it ; but they grow
Happily, and Pan at even blesses them.
While I, alas me hapless, I am joined
Part to their life, and all in longing to them ;
Part to the gods, the bright gods whom I see
Flash through the woods at even or morn, and make
The beautiful familiar trees seem strange ;
And part to mortals and their little life.
Green leaves that cover me, to you I mourn,
My sisters, my more happy sisters, ye.
Rustle, rustle in the summer air,
With happy cries of birds among your boughs :
Be happy, though I am not happy. Nay,
I am not all unhappy, evermore.
One while a bird sings on the topmost bough
And my heart sings, forgetting life and death
And sorrow : so forgetting I were blest,
And bliss the gods deny me. When they walk
The forest before sundawn—Artemis,
Girt for the chase and followed by her hounds,
Queen Herê or another, ere the dawn,
Or Aphrodite with the rosy dawn—

I may not speak my longings, but they pass,
Pass unregardful to their happy heaven.
They see me not—not me, akin to Gods!
These tears are vain.—When mortals pass at eve,
Treading a delicate path between the trees,
Pale mortal men and women, with their loves—
It pains me that I see them, for I know
I am not as they are, and cannot share
The little love that fills their little life—
Vain, vain; and they too pass and see me not.
Ah me, dear leaves, forsaken of gods and men,
And sad because I cannot live their life,
Will you not love me whom none others love?
Will you not teach me how to live your life,
My sisters, my more happy sisters?—live
In peace and quietness and still content,
And freshen and fade and freshen and have no care
And have no longing, full of peace to live,
Forgetting thus for ever life and death
And Gods and men and sorrow and delight.

May 19, 1884.

THE KNIFE-THROWER

I

She ſtood at the door of the tent in the midſt of the Fair. All round
The booths lay thick and white, like mushrooms a-spread on the ground.
Steam-music clamoured and screeched, hoarse voices out-clamoured the ſteam,
And the folk like a ſtream swayed paſt, and the bed was too ſtrait for the ſtream.

II

She ſtood at the door of the tent; a short old patched red gown,
Shapeless (she taught it shape) like an old red rag hung down;
But the night of her hair was upon it, and her body moulded it through,
And the rag was more than a robe, and the old was better than new.

III

The girl was a Romani chai, pure breed, and her great black eyes
Had a perilous underglow, like the smouldering fire that lies
Waiting a breath to leap to a flaming life: they slept:
Our eyes met, challenged, replied, and the gleam in the girl's eyes leapt.

IV

She ſtood at the door ; outside, her father whirled in the air
His broad, large-hafted knives, and vaunted his living ware ;
The men crushed into the tent, and the girl's eyes drew me in :
Her glance was heady like wine, and her face was splendid as sin.

V

Eh, the brave girl she was ! I shivered, not she, as she ſtood
With her face to the man her father and her back to the target of wood ;
She ſtood there, rigid as ſteel, and her eyes had a ſteady glow
As she watched the man her father and he lifted his knives to throw.

VI

One !—a great knife flew ſtraight and quivered an inch away
From the cheek that never paled as they played their deadly play ;
Two !—three !—four !—five !—the blades flashed forth at the girl : she ſtood,
A target of flesh, had one swerved, with her back to the target of wood.

VII

And never the while she ſtirred, as the knives framed-in her face ;
Only, the eyes juſt winced, as the blade sprang into his place.
Braver the far for that ! for she knew it was death or life,
And she dared to ſtand with her face to the man and her eyes on the knife.

VIII

Frightful it was, but worse, when she turned her side, and a blade
Quivered behind her neck, and she leaned back upon it, and laid
Her exquisite throat for a mark: oh heaven, what a curve to the chin!
And the brute's knives sprang at it—brutes!—and all round stuck quivering in.

IX

Fast in the wood they stood, and she slipt from amidst them, and laughed,
And the light in her eyes danced up, and I drank the light as a draught;
We passed from the tent, ashamed (I hope) of the horrible sight,
But the light of the brave's girl eyes was a flame in my brain that night.

October 19, 1888.

A VIGIL IN LENT

If the carved Christ in ivory crucified,
Carved, and in anguish nailed upon the Cross,
And crowned, and pierced by thorn and nail and spear,
He before whom this woman sobbing prays,
If He have any memory of the past,
Or mercy for the present, let Him bow,
Come down at last from off the eternal cross,
And lean a lifted finger and long gaze,
Which shall indeed save her, whom but a look,
Whom but a gesture saves.

The woman kneels
With bowed head underneath the fallen hair
That makes a double darkness in the night. She clasps
Her hands together. In the street below
She hears her lover's whistle.

Suffering Christ!
Mark how the drops start out upon her brow,
The tears that blind her eyelids, and the sobs
That choke her voice in praying.

"O Lord Christ!
Christ that hast Mary for Thy Mother, Christ
That art the Son of God, and very God,
Pity me, for I fall: I cannot turn!
I see the road before me, and behind
The sea roars of the angry memories.
Lord Christ, I cannot turn—Lord, Lord, not this!
Let me live delicately, and be safe.
O there are voices calling eitherward;
I cannot lose the voices. Let me go,

Christ, I would tread the violets in the moss.
The veined violets of the woods of love;
I cannot bruise my feet upon the stones
That pave the sacred floors. Christ, let me go!
How can I pray for strength who cannot wish
The will thereof were in me? He is mine,
Lord, and I live in him; we twain are one,
What is the other? Nay, Thou knowest the man
And that there are in this wide world mayhap
The women who might love him. Never mine!
Never have I been his! Hear me, Lord Christ:
To Thee I swear it. See my lover, Lord:
I can be bold to say Thou madest him
For me, and he is mine, and I am his.
O let it be a very little sin;
Forgive me; do not punish him at all,
If me Thou must remember in Thy wrath;
Let us have peace on earth, and follow us
With peace to heaven. How we will praise Thy name!
Thou shalt have incense of remembering tears
Thou shalt have music of remembering sighs,
Thou shalt have prayers, and surely penitence.
Suffer us, then, this little sin, O God!
(He calls! I come, my lover!) What are we
But leaves a strong wind carries down the air
Far from the trees that bore them? leaves yet green,
Leaves from no bountiful branches plucked, but blown
From a young graft within an aged trunk.
Lord, this is Love: Thy gift: Thine own are we:
Remember me in mercy; for I go."

October 1, 1886.

THE TYRANNICIDE

I cry to man, I cry to God,
I haſte along the beckoning road;
The ſtars are in my brain: they reel
Round the heavens like a wheel;
The fire ſtrikes off them as they spin
And to my brain it enters in;
At every shudder of the night
I shudder back in my affright.

I sware the oath, I did the deed;
He dies, I said, the land is freed.
He sat, he saw me not; I said
"Look once before thy life be dead,
This once," I said, "see Liberty!"
He turned, he turned his eyes on me;
And now with darkness on his eyes
Beneath the look of God he lies.

The ſtars spin round, the wind whirls high;
He did not speak, he did not cry,
He looked one look, he did not fall,
The blood fell down and covered all,
His head bowed down upon his breaſt,
He seemed to sit and take his reſt,
His long white hair flowed down behind:
See—see—there, tangled in the wind!

I sware the oath, I did the deed :
God says the land shall not be freed ;
I thrust the knife into his side,
He looked upon me ere he died ;
He dropt his hands, he bowed his head—
He looked so good when he was dead !
I saw his side, I saw his face :
The people are not free, God says !

The wind is coming down the sky ;
I have great joy he made no cry.
He turned, he turned and looked : I see
His eyes, I see his eyes on me.
Still the stars spin, and pierce my brain ;
I must turn back and go again
And seek him out, and stand and see
If still he turns his eyes on me.

March 4, 1886.

VALE, FLOS FLORUM

Poor Flower of Flowers, hoar Time is harsh with us,
Time who has made all Edens ruinous,
Already his sharp frosts begin to bite.
He will not spare our garden of delight,
Thee too he will not spare, nor thee nor me,
Nor hope now green, nor pallid memory.
Live in to-day: all yesterdays are not,
Swifter than breath, vainer than things forgot,
Mere idle stones our feet have pressed and passed.
Live in to-day; why labour to forecast
The morrows that shall come, and be to-day?
But we are foolish mortals every way.
Child, if thy mirror warns thee, heed it well;
The first grey hair and earliest wrinkle tell,
Alas too well, the tale of coming years:
Nurse no vain hopes, nor cherish fruitless fears.
One sighs, For I have seen the privet pale,
The roses perish and the lilies fail.
Sigh not at all, but say (if worst be worst),
In these last things shall men recall my first,
Wondering, and as old age breaks down and bows
The comely walls of my life's crumbling house,
Then more than ever shall I triumph, when
Age brings my past before the eyes of men.
Poor Flower of Flowers, regard thy mirror well;
It warns; nay, loose me: Flower of Flowers, farewell.

February 16, 1887.

A LITANY OF LETHE

O Lethe, hidden waters never dry,
We, all we weary and heavy-laden, cry,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

—All we have sinned, and yet the scars remain.
—And we, all we had sorrow.—And we had pain.
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost flow from Death to Death through Sleep,
Whose waters are the tears of those that weep,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost bring sweet peace to hospitals,
And to the captive openest prison-walls,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost loose the soul from murdered Truth,
And youth from yesterday, and age from youth,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou from lost love remembered sett'st us free
From hopeless love, a lorn eternity;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou from repentance tak'st the sting, from vice
The memory of a forfeit Paradise;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

A Litany of Lethe

Thou in our grief dost hide from us no less
The anguish of remembered happiness ;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget !

Thou that dost lay alike on all thy spell,
And free the saint from heaven, the wretch from hell,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget !

Bring, bring soft sleep, and close all eyes for us,
Sleep without dreams, and peace oblivious ;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget !

We, all we weary and heavy-laden, cry,
Too tired to live, and yet too weak to die,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget !

December 20, 1886.

AN INTERRUPTION IN COURT

"Sirs! this is some mistake! You know not, sirs,
This is my daughter! See, my daughter! Ah!
Jenny, my child, we have not met before,
These many years; where have you been, my child?
I know there was no wrong; they said—Let's laugh,
My Jenny; I have found you, this strange way,
Here. Why, I'm glad indeed they came to make
This—this mistake. What is it, Jenny? Sirs,
Permit me, sirs, an old man, scarcely strong
Of late, since—since . . . Permit me, there is here
Some error, if I so may term it. This,
Being my dear child, cannot be, indeed,
The person whom you take her for. I speak
As one who knows her. I am her father. Yes—
(You'll pardon me, then, Jenny, if I say
I am your father? will you not, my child?)
You see, sirs, I am old, quite poor—quite poor!
I have known better fortunes—let that pass—
You see we could not meet on equal terms,
My girl and I. I would not have my girl
Ashamed of her old father; and, in short,
We have not seen each other for so long,
She did not know me, you observed, just now?"

Now while the old man spoke, I watched the girl.
First, as he thrust and elbowed through the hall,
Hat forward, coat torn back, and waving arms,
Up to the dock, and grasped her hand, and gasped

Half-inarticulate words—the woman ſtood
Stock-ſtill, juſt turning, with a brazen ſtare
(Be sure he never saw) above the paint
Still left upon her cheeks ; she looked, indeed,
Callous, case-hardened and impenitent.
She only wore that mask a minute. Quick,
Fallen forward on the rail, her forehead pressed
Againſt his hand and her hand holding it,
Weeping great tears, she sobbed out, " Father, father ! "
There crouched and ſtayed.
All through the hall there ran
A shiver ; neighbours looked, among themselves,
One at another ; no one spoke : all heads
Strained forward towards one point : sheer silence : ſtill
The old man talked.
And no one hindered him !
I think that all, the very lawyers, felt
A something : was it awe, fear, sympathy ?
They held their breath, and said no word. Juſt so,
Speechless, you ſtand and scarcely dare to breathe,
While a wrecked vessel, tossing on the reef,
Sways halfway over, and the rope from land
Shoots out, a line of light, above the waves—
Straight to the maſt, where the drenched wretches cling ?
Or vainly now the laſt time in the surge ?
I've seen it, and I saw this.
Still, I say,
The old man talked.
" I crave you patience, sirs,
And thank your kindness ; an old man, you see,
I cannot say quite shortly what I would.

You pardon me? I pray you look then, see
If Jenny here before you could be such
As that you speak of. Jenny, do not cry;
All shall be well.
Sirs, God was good to me,
Who gave two daughters: this is one, the other
Died younger: she is now in heaven: her grave
Has a white stone: I often visit it.
But Jenny ever was my dear one. She,
When Milly lay about, nor cared to stir,
(Only looked at you with that patient smile),
Ran always, ran and laughed, and made the place
As merry as a nest. She sang—dear heart!—
I hear her now. But this is not my tale.
What, indeed, should I say? Oh, sirs, I mean,
If you had seen her always as a child,
If you had seen how good, how good she was,
How good she was to me; if you could know
How dear she is to me, and how I love her,
Now, now she is no longer but a child—
A woman, grown a woman—she, my child,
I have not seen her for so long; dear Lord,
So long since I have seen her! And now, now,
Knowing how good, how good and pure she is,
My child—to see her thus! Good sirs, forgive
These tears I can scarce keep from falling down.—
I feel them in my voice. 'Twill make you weep,
Truly, I think, yourselves. Jenny, stand up:
You will permit her, friends, to go with me?"

That broke the spell. My eyes, perhaps, being moist,

Saw tears in others' eyes ; but till that word
The very judge seemed touched. That broke the spell.
Seized by the rough hands of the law, thrust back,
Scared, the old man let fall his daughter's hand,
Feebly resisting. Still he tried to speak—
Vainly. The case proceeded. Tearless now
The woman stood, with tight-locked lips and hands,
And I, who marked her eyes, could see in them
Unutterable agony—the light
Of the quenched innocent years. The case went on.

Even when the verdict and the sentence came,
The full conviction, all the shameful truth,
She heard as though she heard it in a dream :
Nor any sigh broke from her. And no sound
Came from the old man. But the man indeed
Had fainted. They removed her quietly,
And the court thinned. In passing out I went
A long way round : some pressed about the man :
I could not dare behold him when he woke !

November 19, 1885.

BELL IN CAMP

I LOVED him! Dare to give me back the lie!
Cowards and white-faced hussies. O my God,
That I should ſtand and see him at my feet,
My Charlie, my old partner, and you things,
Flirting your painted curls againſt the light,
Dare to mouth lies at that dead man and me!
Nell, if you know who shot him, tell me, Nell.
Here's the blood dabbled all about the floor,
Clotted in pools, curdled, and here's the hole,
And his shirt ſtained about it in the cheſt.
And he's all cold! Lie on my breaſt, now, dear,
I'll nurse you, and I'll make you warm again.
Oh, oh! if he'd grow warm again, I'd let
You, Moll, you, Bet, try all your airs on him,
And make believe to blush (you can't, you know)
When he looked at you with his eyes! I'd let
My Charlie think to love you if he would,
You wretched things, and leave me mope and sit
Stabbed through and through with pins for every look
And word and touch. I'd let you—if he would—
Whisper and bob heads in the corner there,
And laugh—laugh as you can—and leer aside,
And let him laugh out frank and loud and long,
Looking at me, to see the blood spirt up
And dash my cheeks with red. Oh, he should have
His will and way for ever. Won't you rise,
Charlie, and ſtrike and curse me, Charlie dear?
Now he won't ſtrike or curse me any more,

He'll never any more be drunk again,
He'll never speak, not even to say: "Old Bell!"
He'll never, never, never speak again,
Not even to swear, God bless you, Charlie dear.
God bless you—I think He'll bless you, Charlie dear.
What! Gone? All right, Nell, stay by me, good Nell.
You're a kind one—the only one. You'll live
And lead a better life, Nell; you're so young;
Be honest, Nell; you're a kind good one.

Look,
Here's all I love on earth; here. I don't know
Quite what I ought to feel; I don't so much
Seem mad with God, and mad to go and die,
As struck, and tired, and wearied out with life.
I don't much care to die: what's life or death?
Folks die of broken hearts, they say: I feel
Walking along a grey long dusty road
At twilight, walking on into the night
And never counting milestones.

Charlie said
He'd marry me: he always said that, Nell.

Do you think, Nell, God cares how people die? . . .
They shot him; but you don't know who, you say:
Nobody knows or cares, in Silver Gulch.

I s'pose you'd hardly call him good, Nell? Eh,
Don't laugh; you hurt me. But what's "good"? Some
men—

Heaven help 'em !—don't get tempted, can't go wrong ;
And where's the goodness ? Oh, I hate 'em all !
God knows me, how I loved my Charlie. Well,
A man can't quite be bad, I've heard and think,
When even such a woman loves him. So,
Because I loved him, won't God let him pass ?
The thing that I am can't beat God in love !

Nell, you're so young. When I knew Charlie first
There wasn't a man in all the camp like him.
I see him now, the same ; but people say,
And yes, I know, he's not the man he was.
He's still the same to me ; and now he's dead,
I hold him on my heart, and see him there,
And he's the Charlie of old days. He sings
Something about a heart that never changes,
And smiles at me between his lowered lids,
And speaks it, and that's better than the song.
And there's a sharp red shadow, as the fire
Leaps, flung across his face and eyes and hair ;
And all behind him black long trunks stand up
And climb with dim boughs twisted, and shut off
The great world and the wide heaven.
I see that,
And it's more woeful than to feel how cold
He's lying.
Better go, Nell. Let me be !

July 12, 1886.

A CRISIS

He could not sleep. The daylight ebbed away,
The long hot daylight of those day-long noons,
Before his waking eyes, and brought the night;
And the night passed, the sleepless night all hours
Crowded with dreadful minutes; one by one
He watched them, and he heard them throb and throb,
Feeling them in his body like a pulse,
Beating, and not to be quieted; the dawn
Crept up on leaden wings, lingered, and crept,
And lingeringly brought the morrow in.
He saw the white face of another day.
Words come into his mind, and bent his knees,
And then they passed; he stared against the wall
Hot with the sun, and could not drop his lids,
But wondered, kneeling, why he meant to pray?
For night, he thought; but could not tell: for night,
Or that the day might hold the night off long.

He sought the shelter of the pines. Their voice
Lulled him, but could not bring him sleep, nor shut
The open gates of his too-populous brain,
The ever-open gates. He oft would clasp
His hands across his temples, crying on peace;
But no peace came. He walked among the pines,
Now dusky-bright, cool with the shadow of heat,
Brimful of silence; afar off an axe
Rang dully, and at times a cone fell soft.
He neither heard nor saw. O cursed Self,

He muttered ; for his selfhood hemmed him round,
A flame of fire about a narrow ring,
And fleeing he vainly circled, vainly beat
The fatal limits. One persistent thought
Panted behind, and urged him on : he turned
And faced his foe.
In a scattered flash of lights,
Leaping, and whirled, and mixed inextricably,
The fiery letters of a deadly sin
Stood out before him. All beside was vague.
He could remember nothing. Am I mad,
He wondered, or indeed this criminal ?
He strove to think, but as he strove his mind
Faltered, all shone, lights danced before his brain,
The ground rose up before him, swayed, fell back,
He reeled, and caught both hands against a pine.
There glowed the letters and the fiery act :
He gazed on them with horror.
But indeed
He strove against the spectre, for as yet
His will was in his hands, and fought for him.
He turned and wooed his memory, and she came,
A handmaid bringing mellow wine. He drained
Cup after cup with eager lips, and heard
A laughter, that was his, sound in his heart
Like hollow echoes in a tomb. The past
Smiled in his eyes with ominous eyes ; all pale
The ghosts of many yesterdays long gone
Walked sheeted round their graves ; he heard a bell
Toll in the darkness ; darkness and the dead
Rose up before him.

Now began to form,
Bred of the fever of his sleepless brain,
Distempered dreamings. Faces in the dark,
Through the hot throbbing age-long nights, and when
He shut his lids against the day, came near,
Staring upon him with wide-open eyes,
Eyes of an ageless agony endured,
Faces absorbed upon a sea of mist,
Still, tossing, floating, shuddering, intertwined,
Going and coming! At a slant of sun,
Striking a dancing finger up and down,
He started; at a shadow, at the clock
Calling the hours out suddenly. A step,
Treading the streets behind him, gave him fear;
He trembled at a voice.
And now his will
Slipt slowly, like a stone into the sea,
Slowly away from him. Steadily now
The haunting thought that tracked his heels drew near,
Nearer, and pressed behind him, and crept up,
As with a hot breath on his neck, a hand
Upon his shoulder, and an evil face
Drawing his eyes inevitably to it.
He struggled less; he let the vile thing creep
Closer and closer, till it whispered him,
Claiming him for its own. "And I am thine,"
He said aloud; "for I have done the deed:
Surely it must be, I have done the deed!"
So thus the shadow of a fancied crime
Lay on his soul. He brooded o'er it, mused,
Beheld himself with horror, and yet watched

With an intense immitigable fear
The hooded secret peeping from his breast.
The horror grew ; he loathed himself, and gazed
Fearfully up at heaven, and called the sun
" God's eye," and shrunk away from it, and cried
(Silently, lest the earth should hear) " Lost, lost ! "
And his whole soul cowered in upon itself.

Now on a day of stifling heat there rolled
Heavily up against the fainting wind
Dull sudden clouds with ragged edges, heaped
Tumultuously together. Bound to bound
They spanned the narrowing sky. Suddenly forth
Sprang from the farthest clouds and leapt and flashed
Cleaving and shearing through the veil of rain
Incessant arrows of the lightning, voiced
With crackling thunders crashing through the vault.
Shaft after shaft rained down from heaven. He stood
Voicelessly agonising ; all his soul
Shuddered within him at the wrath of God,
The anger of the outraged Lawgiver,
Pealed in a voice from Sinai ; bare he stood
To every arrow flaming down the skies,
The witness and the avenger. " Strike ! " he cried :
A burst of blazing fire filled all the air :
And then the madness took him ; while the storm
Howled in the heights and tossed the deeps to light,
Hurling the cataracts of the clouds abroad
And ruining down the hills of heaven in flame.

December 14, 1886.

VENUS OF MELOS

The inaccessible Gods of old,
Regarding from a peak of sky
A little seething world outrolled
Beneath their calm infinity,
Loomed always, in men's asking eyes,
Larger and vaguer than their skies.

They reaped the corn of prayers and vows,
They drank the nectar of men's tears,
Men's incense filled the heavenly house,
Men's sighing sang into their ears,
Yet never up from earth there went
The love whose service is content.

Man's soul desired to see and know
The visible music of her dreams,
Some earthly shape ordained to show
That perfect beauty, whereof gleams,
Half lost, yet never quite forgot,
Flashed through the darkness of her thought.

A near horizon held her in:
Beyond!—who knoweth what wonder there?
She heeded not, but sought within
The bounded compass of her care.
The world's ideal did she seek:
And lo the Goddess of the Greek!

Goddess, upon thy placid brows
The crown of all her homage lay—
The laurel of her sacred boughs,
The coronal of her conquering bay;
And still we pour our costliest wine
Before thy marble form divine.

Thou, Goddess of the actual earth,
First-born and last of dreams that are
The seed of an immortal birth,
The message of a morn afar,—
Thou art alike the guide and goal,
Art's oriflamme and aureole.

The centuries shower their storms in vain
On thy serene eternity;
Thou smilest on man's busy pain,
And his small dust of memory
Strewn to oblivion—thou who see'st
The end of prophet, king and priest.

All passes:—sceptre, sword and throne,
Laws and the might whereby they swayed,
And creeds and conquests. Art alone,
Changeless among the changing made,
Lasts ever, and her workmen build
On sites that fallen temples filled.

October 25, 1885.

SCÈNES DE LA VIE DE BOHÈME

I. EPISODE OF A NIGHT OF MAY

The coloured lanterns lit the trees, the grass,
The little tables underneath the trees,
And the rays dappled like a delicate breeze
Each wine-illumined glass.

The pink light flickered, and a shadow ran
Along the ground as couples came and went ;
The waltzing fiddles sounded from the tent,
And *Giroflée* began.

They sauntered arm in arm, these two ; the smiles
Grew chilly, as the best spring evenings do.
The words were warmer, but the words came few,
And pauses fell at whiles.

But she yawned prettily. " Come then," said he.
He found a chair, Veuve Clicquot, some cigars.
They emptied glasses and admired the stars,
The lanterns, night, the sea.

Nature, the newest opera, the dog
(So clever) who could shoulder arms and dance ;
He mentioned Alphonse Daudet's last romance,
Last Sunday's river-fog,

Love, Immortality ; the talk ran down
To these mere lees : they wearied each of each,
And tortured ennui into hollow speech,
And yawned, to hide a frown.

She jarred his nerves ; he bored her—and so soon.
Both were polite, and neither cared to say
The word that mars a perfect night of May.
They watched the waning moon.

May 21, 1888.

II. RISPETTO

Her lover waits and lingers at the door:
" Come out, my dear, come out, my dear," he sighs.
" But ah," she thinks, " there's one who loves me more;"
She will not hearken to her lover's cries.

" Good-night, good-bye," the woeful lover says:
I laugh to meet him with his moody face.
I laugh to think of what in heart thinks she.
—Come out, my dear, and say good-night to me!

June 11, 1888.

III. AT THE BALL

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo.*

Ah me, my heart is heavy as lead,
And the fiddle's sobbing, " Laurette is dead ! "

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo.*

My heart is heavy, I stand apart,
O how shall I heal my broken heart ?

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo.*

" O, I'll heal your heart, my friend, my friend ;
Love me or leave, for love has an end."

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo.*

She has bright black eyes and thick black hair,
Belle brune : now my poor Laurette was fair.

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo.*

" Come dance with me." Laurette, Laurette !
" She has forgotten ; do you forget ! "

Two and two, to and fro,
They dance to the strains of *Manolo*.

Do you love me, little one? "Yes—may be."
Then I love you, I think. "Come dance with me."

Two and two, to and fro,
We dance to the strains of *Manolo*.

September 25, 1887.

Ivan. So, he is dead, poor fool, they tell me. Well,
'Tis well. He may tell our secrets to the worms ;
They will not heed him, and we shall not fear.

Dmitri. Ay, he is dead : thank heaven for it, Ivan ;
We must be very thankful. All the same,
I think it best, if you can understand,
To say no more of this thing, out of doors,
With people—you perceive ?—than must needs be.
No reticence, believe me ; nor no need
To push the topic into other mouths,
Whose tongues perhaps are bitter. You perceive ?

Ivan. You mean ?

Dmitri. I mean the brethren are best served
By silence. [*Vera rushes in.*
What's this ? Vera ?

Vera. O my God,
Vassili is murdered, foully murdered Oh !
The talk's in all the streets. Dmitri, you knew,
And did not tell me ?

Dmitri. Well, and if I know ?

Vera. You knew, you knew : I would I knew it not :
I would I had known it earlier. Did you hear
Last night when you came late——

Dmitri. Go, Ivan. [*Ivan goes out.*
Late,
Late, yes, late—

Vera. Did you know then? for I heard
A something in your step upon the stair,
Heavy, uncertain, like the sound of it
That night when mother died, and you came home
And told me. Why, then, did you tell me not?
Dmitri. O yes, I knew—of course—and kept it back:
That, that's your wifely way. What if I did?
Any little thing—you kept it back, says she!
What if I did, I tell you? What's to you
If twenty men like Vassili were dead?
Vera. To me? O husband! Dead—my friend, my friend!
Dmitri. Ay, your dear friend—too dear, belike. Well, well,
He's dead now, and that's very true.
Vera. O Vassili,
My kind, dear, good friend . . . dead. It cannot be,
It must be: all's one. They have murdered you—
God curse the murderer; all the plagues of God
Light on the murderer!
Dmitri. Vera, will you put
An end to all this squalling? Murderer!
Who said the man was murdered? Like enough
He had his reasons, Vassili,—I think
He did the deed himself.
Vera. You know he did not.
You know as clear as heaven he did not do it.
Dmitri. Eh, how should I know?
Vera. Why, all know, I know.
You know, that someone foully murdered him.
Ah God, he's a saint now.

Dmitri. You will weep out
Those pretty eyes, my madam, that he praised.
Well, weep for you and me: I shall not weep:
I tell you, I am glad on't. Oh, *you* know,
You, meek-face! you know I have cause enough
To joy myself in this. I am most glad.

Vera. Dmitri, you will not say those words again.
Fool, jealous fool, will you kill all my heart
With your foul tauntings? Kill? You say you are glad?
Why are you glad, and talk of killing? You,
You, you, you killed him!

Dmitri. Madam?

Vera. Yes, you, you!
I see it all, I see it. You can dare
To look me in the face? Devils are bold,
And look God back in answer. You are a devil—
You are a murderer!

Dmitri. Madam, when your torrent
Foams to a finish, I will tell you. I
Killed him.

Vera. No, husband: I was but in anger,
I never meant it. No. I did not mean
The mad words I have said. Say no, say no.
You too, you jest? It cannot be you mean it?
That were too horrible. Say no!

Dmitri. I say
I killed him, and I justify the deed.

Vera. God, bring the night down swiftly! Bury me
Deep in the darkness. Can I ever look,
Ever again, upon the day?

Dmitri. Words, words!
I pray you for a little reason now.
Will you call all the town upon us, eh?
Speak, if you must speak, lower, in God's name,
Vera. 'Tis true. That I should trust a woman!
You plucked it from me, Vera. I was wrong—
That is, I mean, to trust you. For the deed,
That I can justify to God above,—
If there is any God above, that is.
Men will judge otherwise, most surely. Hence,
You keep my secret, do you understand?
Vera!
Vera. Oh!
Dmitri. Do you hear me, Vera? Speak.
Vera. No, don't speak, Dmitri! Is it all a dream?
No. Say it's all a dream.
Dmitri. It is no dream.
But are *you* dreaming, woman? What is it,
Vera?
Vera. I'm stunned, I think. Be quiet. Oh,
Now I begin to see things clear again.
It cannot be! Do say it is not, do,
Dmitri! For I should hate you if it were—
My God, how I must hate you if it be!
Dmitri. Vera, these words are toys. Arouse yourself.
I killed him; yes, I killed him, since you have it,
And you must keep the secret. Understand,
I had no voice, I was but the hand in it:
Others—you know who—the Committee—passed
Sentence; I served their purpose. In a word,
I killed him. Murder? not at all. I dealt

The legal execution. Do you hear?
Mere legal execution. You'll forgive
The words I used when you provoked me, Vera?
I think you loved him once: that's past, all's past;
He's in the grave—as good as in the grave:
I'm in the grave if you should speak a word.
I know you will not, Vera.

Vera. Creature! You!
Coward! That's how you beg your life of me!
"Forgive you?"—flattery?—"legal?" What's all this?
Oh, what a conscience you must have this while!
I would not for a thousand years of life
Bear such a conscience in my bosom. Oh,
Dmitri, and I have loved you!

Dmitri. Dearest one,
We have been angry with each other. Come,
Be friends again. I love you. All is well.
Just never say a word, and all is safe.

Vera. Never to say a word—yes, but to bear
The knowledge of it in your heart, to bear
The consciousness about you—all your days;
Always to feel, there's someone coming by
Will read it, all in crimson, on my brow!
To feel you carry that within your heart
Would make the boldest quail to sit with you,
Would make the vilest spurn you with his foot,
The merely decent loathe you worse than hell:
To have this always, every day, each day,
Lie down with you, and rise and sit with you,
And walk with you, and cleave to flesh and soul—

Dmitri. Stop! God, it's all come over me! stop! stop!
I feel it! Oh, be quiet! Shut your eyes—
My eyes, that is!

Vera. Dmitri!

Dmitri. There! I'm a fool!
What did you mean by working on me so?
You turned my brain for a moment. Now 'tis past.
I tell you, 'twas a merely legal—yes—
A merely legal execution.

Vera. Yes,
Mutter your "merely legal"! You know well
You've done a murder on the noblest man
God ever made in Russia.

Dmitri Noblest man?
Eh, noblest man? He was a snake. I'm glad
It was I that killed him, not another, now
I know you loved him, as indeed I thought
In stabbing him.

Vera. Dmitri, you don't believe
One single word you utter. I have never
Loved anyone but you, and now, I think—
Yes, before God, and that cold corpse—I think
I do love no one.

Dmitri That I could have loved
This woman, this cold piece of clay—not life!
What if I did a thousand times the deed
You speak of?—if you loved me, you would love.

Vera. Ah, dead love, hearken to the murderer!

Dmitri. Murderer! There you shriek it—murderer!
Is it your will to drive me out of mind?

Always that hideous word—I am *not*, I say!
Don't name it!
Vera. So you cannot bear the name
That yet can bear the being! How you start
If anyone speaks out the thing you are!
I will not speak it, Dmitri. If you knew
How wholly I despise you! I'll not speak;
Nor love you any more until I die.

October 30, 1885.

ESTHER BRAY

I

Esther, my lass, come hither ; stand there ; I've a thing to say.
Lord, but your cheeks are white ! So be it, Esther Bray.
Stand you there in the light o' the fire. Now answer me :
When the babe that's yours is born, whose wife'll his mother be ?

II

Stand up, girl ! Look you here, I've a right to ask, I think :
Child of my age you are, and I've gotten you meat and drink.
Mother's dead, you know, and I've looked to you, Esther Bray :
Mine you are, and, by God, I've a right to ask, I say !

III

Well, so you've never a word, and never a ring you wear.
Look you, here where I sit, here in the selfsame chair,
Father and son have sat, time out of mind : not one
Blushed for girl or boy of his getting—father or son.

IV

Father and son we've lived on the land, and we've worked the mill.
I've no son, but I said, there's the girl, she'll have it still,

And Dick, he's a steady lad, works well at the trade ; maybe,
If the match is made—No ! no ! but it's bastards follow me.

V

Esther Bray, rise up from the ground ; uncover your face !
You feature your mother, lass, and you're standing there in her place,
Right where she used to stand, hands folded ; the fire would shine
Sharp on her wedding-ring. Where's yours, lass ? That was mine.

VI

Honest and bold we've been, and the word of a Bray was gold,
We held up our heads with the best, we were always honest and bold.
I'm the last ; ay ! ay ! grey hairs ; but never you care !
Let the old fool's head go hang : do you think you've whitened a hair ?

VII

Hearken to me, my girl, you're mine, and I keep you here ;
Bed and board you'll have, and your clothes, come year, go year.
Child is child, and you're mine, but the brat's a beggarly loan :
I'll house you under my roof, but the brat may find his own.

VIII

Hey, do you hear, my lass? That's square. Why don't
you rise?
Esther, rise up, I say. Here's brandy. God, she lies—
You'll never move again, then, Esther? Only see,
I've killed her, killed my child! That's well. Now, God,
take me!

December 29, 1886.

AN ACT OF MERCY

Now this is why he killed her. First, she lied.
He said, " You love me still ? " and she replied,
" Still." But he held her letter all the while,
Crushed in his hand behind him ; so, his smile
Tightened about his lips, which twitched. He laid
The damning thing before her. She betrayed
No tremor, but the colour left her cheeks :
So, when these women palter, nature speaks.
He said, " You love me still ? " She looked him down
With that magnificent darkness of her frown,
And clearly as she told the lie she told
The truth he asked for. " Are you then thus old,
And have you learned so little of our hearts ?
'Tis men teach women how to play their parts
By giving them the parts they learn to play.
I say, thus old ; and as we stand to-day
Not to be shrouded from each other's eyes
By any vestige of the old disguise,
Since you have learnt the truth I spared you, sir—
Why, take the truth to be your comforter !
Look close at me—but you are close—well, see,
Have I a grey hair ? can you spy on me
A wrinkle ? have I lost a tint of youth ?
For you (since I shall speak the very truth)—
You are both old and ill : the ring you gave
Purchased a wife, it did not buy a slave.
Your wife I have been—to the world ; your nurse
I may be ; but I shall not be that worse

Disgrace than these disgraces any more,
Your flatterer, nor resume that mask I wore,
Nor need to say fair words, nor look fond looks :
These things are over ; you will read your books,
And I——" she paused, and then she laughed (her eyes
Were bluer than the depths of hyacinth skies,
And she laughed sweetly : she was fair to see).
His smile grew harder, griped his chin, while she
Laughed, and he knew the measure of the cup
She poured, and set for him to drink it up.
Should she not drink it with him ? What if God
Placed in his hands the expiating rod,
The rod of vengeance purifying sin ?
Should God not ope the gates to let her in ?
She stood there so superb in guiltiness—
So young in guilt ; but she was lost here, yes,
Lost ; and there mingled subtly in his brain
The lie, the truth more hateful, and again
The laugh that woke old echoes down in hell.
It beat within his brain, a wakening bell.
She swam before him.

He was mad, they say.
He loved her, and he saw no other way.

March 17, 19, 1888.

MAGDALEN ON THE THRESHOLD

I

The rifted doorways shed
Faint lights across the moonlit outer air,
Like feet of angels in a dream that tread
Adown a lighted stair.
And like the smile of very heaven they seem
To one who watches wearily without;
And then again they gleam
Like lights to one eternally shut out.

II

The woman trembling stands
Beyond the threshold, gazing inwardly;
Light steps approach unheeded, and now hands
Upon her shoulders lie.
A voice like a jarred harp-string when the chords
Sound harsh and coarse that once were sweet and clear,
With amorous broken words
Salutes the startled hollow of her ear.

III

"Kisses, my Magdalen!
Kisses, and lights, and scents, and sounds, and songs!
The moon is broken over all the glen,
And night to love belongs.
Come, love;" he pressed her arm; from far below
Up rose the sound of some stringed instrument.
She said, "I cannot go,"
And all her soul into her sighing sent.

IV

" The night is at the flood ;
The feast is forth ; behold ; " and " come," he cried.
But she his dear caresses all withstood
And shuddered from his side.
He with his amorous arms would draw her near,
Muttering of love, and pressed her yielded mouth ;
He felt her shake with fear,
And her lips hot as deserts of the South.

V

He called upon her name ;
She did not hearken ; nay, although he spake
Of festal joys, fair feasting and sweet shame.
She saw the long rays shake.
Her lover piped his erewhile-heeded charms ;
Vainly he piped ; and vainly spread for her
The warm nest of his arms :
Her face was as an open sepulchre.

VI

Lost in amaze he drew
Backward, and she on faltering feet crept up
To where the light was shed the doorway through
Like wine out of a cup.
One face of all the faces thronged within
Her eyes perceived ; she started forward fast ;
Then smote herself for sin,
And tottered back into the guilty past.

VII

Her eyeballs inly turned
Saw in her soul such utter shamefulness,
That like her cheeks with aching fire they burned
Of desolate distress.
Flowered gardens with a ruin of wormed buds,
Leaves on the pathways, red leaves on the ground,
Watered with bitter floods ;
These in the confines of her soul she found.

VIII

She turned away her eyes,
Lest she should grow quite wild with seeing it ;
Her soul the witness of her soul denies ;
Her thoughts like swallows flit.
This flies and cries at gates of summer hours,
That moans upon a pool of festered green ;
This beats on banks of flowers,
That breathes the poisonous herbs that grow unseen.

IX

And now her lover stept
Closer, and whispered low the one word, " Love."
Her strained eyes grew moist, she bowed and wept.
He, knowing nought thereof,
Shouted a song, and thought she would have gone.
But she, with streaming eyes, her fallen hair
About her, staggered on
Across the threshold out of the cool air.

x

The Face before her glows ;
She sees no other ; past are fear and doubt ;
She pours the lingering floodtide of her woes
In tears and kisses out.
It is His feet she kisses ; these, her tears
Shall lave, her lips caress, and shall not cease,
Until His voice she hears,
Saying, " Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

July 12, 1885.

A WOMAN

I

Her beauty wrought the hours a wrong,
Which gained, for all they gave her, nought;
Her very silence was a song
Sweeter than music to the thought:
God had no part in her he wrought.

II

The living crown upon her brows,
Red-golden, sealed her queen of earth;
Her eyes, brown-golden, in a drowse
Of vivid quiet, watched their worth,
Too indolently calm for mirth.

III

They watched the hearts of men, and held
Princes and lovers with a look,
And stirred the pallid blood of eld,
And smote the virtuous with rebuke,
And spoils of realms and peoples took.

IV

They, without labour, bought and sold
Heart's faith, a precious merchandise,
With tears for silver, blood for gold,
And bargainings of costly sighs
For the rich treasuries of those eyes.

V

Dowered with all beauty bodily,
Her soul she meshed in her own snare;
Beyond herself she might not see,
Infantine-idly unaware
Of any end but being fair.

VI

Therefore being dead she is but dust,
And being but dust she shall not rise
With souls the grave hath kept in trust.
Soulless, her body, dying, dies,
Cast out of hell and paradise.

June 14, 1886.

BY AN EMPTY GRATE

I

She crouches huddled by an empty grate,
An old worn wrinkled woman. Slow the day
Dies in the garret window-panes to grey;
And her hope dies, and leaves her desolate.
She feels the hand of Death upon her laid
And shudders in the shade.

II

She lies upon the floor a quivering heap,
Tight little sobs break through her ſtrained grey lips.
She heaves as water heaves the shuddering ships.
Her lids are leaden that she should not weep.
She ſtruggles hard with Death; she feels him near,
And flies upon her fear.

III

And who is she that she should so love life?
The grave is full of worms, she feels them crawl.
There is a hell, she fancies, after all.
She clings to earth, and ſtrives a fearful ſtrife;
All left her yet of soul and body fight
Againſt the coming night.

IV

'Tis Death; she feels 'tis Death has gripped her faſt;
Weak, she grows weaker; all her being drinks

The drenching grave-dews ; and worn out she sinks
Into a heavy wakefulness at last.
Her strife perforce subsides ; her brain lives on,
Though nigh all life is gone.

V

Then, as she lies delirious, well-nigh dead,
There comes, as through some long-unopened door,
A memory of the days that went before
Those days wherein she earned her bitter bread.
And she is once again a child, and sees
The country and the trees ;

VI

Her father's mill, the great wheel turning round ;
The garden, and the roses up the walls ;
She hears a voice, it is her mother calls
A child, she scampers at the joyful sound,
And clings about her apron-strings, and hears
The dear voice in her ears.

VII

The little room she sees, so pure and white,
Wherein she slept a child, and woke at morn
To the clear rustle of the gold-white corn :
Now in her dream she hears it through the night ;
The honeysuckle at the window pressed
Sheds peace into her breast.

VIII

She folds her hands as though she were a child;
Old thoughts come back, and pain gives place to peace;
She sinks into her childhood's dreamless ease;
She smiles, who for so long has never smiled.
I know not if God quieted her eyes;
Like a tired child she dies.

August 14, 1885.

THE PRODIGAL SON

I WILL arise, and leave these haggard realms.
The nether fire's breath spots the rusty grass.
The insatiate hunger of the blight o'erwhelms
The lean year's barren promise. Let me pass,
O woman, from the hold of hell and thee!
What have I done that thou should'st hold me so?
In Love's name, loosen me and set me free;
If not for love, in pity let me go.
Why should I linger? for the land is bare,
And wings of famine labour up the wind.
Already I have wasted all my share
Of living bread: the husks remain behind,
Husks that the swine do eat. And must I wait,
Weary and famished, fallen and desolate?

October 12, 1886.

A HOME CIRCLE

The mother sits beside the grate, where still
The dying embers give a flickering glow;
She hears folk passing in the street below,
She shivers, for the night is very chill.

The younger girl is sleeping in her bed:
The elder—'twas her feet perhaps that passed,
And not alone, so tremulously fast:
She is scarce used, as yet, to earn her bread.

The mother hearkens, not for her. She knows
The reeling step upon the narrow stair.
He comes, and he shall have a dreamless sleep.
And the child sleeps. God have in pity these
Who watch the stars out in a mute despair
Mother and daughter, and *one* may not weep.

September 27, 1887.

A WINTER NIGHT

The pale moon shining from a pallid sky
Lit half the street, and over half she laid
Her folded mantle ; through the dark-browed shade
White windows glittered, each a watchful eye.
The dim wet pavement lit irregularly
With shimmering streaks of gaslight, faint and frayed,
Shone luminous green where sheets of glass displayed
Long breadths of faded blinds mechanically.

The night was very still ; above, below,
No sound, no breath, no change in anything ;
Only, across the squares of damp lit street,
Shooting a mocking double from his feet,
With vague uncertain steps went to and fro
A solitary shadow wandering.

December 11, 1886.

LAZARUS AT THE GATE

" Brothers, the mirth runs high, here in the hall."
" Brothers, we have no heart for mirth, alas ! "
" Nay, come and join us ; griefs like shadows pass."
" Not ours, not ours, in anywise at all."
" Here is cool shade, cool wine ambrosial."
" Without here, all the sun's might smites the grass."
" Slow slide the golden sands of Time's hour-glass."
" Swift, swift ; and we would seize them ere they fall."

" O brothers, we rejoice and are at ease."
" And, brothers, we in sorrow work and wait."
" Your dirges drown our daintiest melodies."
" Yea, dirges, but the dirges of your fate."
" What cry is this that comes upon the breeze ? "
" The cry of Lazarus calling at the gate."

January 17, 1886.

THE STREET-SINGER

She sings a pious ballad wearily ;
Her shivering body creeps on painful feet
Along the muddy runlets of the street ;
The damp is in her throat : she coughs to free
The cracked and husky notes that tear her chest ;
From side to side she looks with eyes that grope
Feverishly hungering in a hopeless hope,
For pence that will not come ; and pence mean rest,
The rest that pain may steal at night from sleep,
The rest that hunger gives when satisfied ;
Her fingers twitch to handle them ; she sings
Shriller ; her eyes, too hot with tears to weep,
Fasten upon a window, where, inside,
A sweet voice mocks her with its carollings.

THE ABANDONED

The moonlight touched the sombre waters white.
Beneath the bridge 'twas darker. Was she cold?
She shivered. Her poor shawl was worn and old,
And she was desolate, and it was night.
The slow canal crept onward; to her sight
It seemed to beckon, and the lapping told
Of rest and quiet sleep: how sweet to fold
The hands from toil and close the eyes from light,
And so shut out all memory, and go
There where men sleep, and dreams, perhaps, are not.
O never any dreams, she murmured; so,
Longing for sleep, the sleep that comes with death
She fell, she felt the water, and forgot
All, save the drowning agony of breath.

May 27, 1888.

SATIETY

I HAVE outlived my life, and linger on,
Knowing myself the ghost of one that was.
Come, kindly death, and let my flesh, being grass,
Nourish some beast's sad life when I am gone.
What joy is left in all I look upon?
I cannot sin, it wearies me. Alas!
I loathe the laggard moments as they pass;
I tire of all but swift oblivion.

Yet, if all power to taste the dear deceit
Be not outworn and perished utterly,
If it could be, then surely it were sweet:
I go down on my knees and pray: O God,
Send me some last illusion, ere I be
A clod, perhaps at rest, within a clod.

January 22, 1888.

FORGOTTEN DEATH

The man is dead, yea, buried dark and deep:
Alas, he knoweth not that he is dead.
As one who lives, he prays for daily bread;
He sows for harvests, and he seems to reap.
Men call him lord; great store hath he in keep.
For him at princely boards the feast is spread;
He strives and hopes; hath been of old time wed:
Yet deep the grave is where he lies asleep.

Woe to him that he hath not known his lot!
Self-slain he stands, a corpse unburied yet:
His flesh he fed, his soul he left to rot,
Nor hath for it remembrance or regret.
If he his death-in-life have so forgot
Shall God for him the second death forget?

December 13, 1885.

THE SOUL'S PROGRESS

It enters life it knows not whence; there lies
A mist behind it and a mist before.
It stands between a closed and open door.
It follows hope, yet feeds on memories.
The years are with it, and the years are wise;
It learns the mournful lesson of their lore.
It hears strange voices from an unknown shore,
Voices that will not answer to its cries.

Blindly it treads dim ways that wind and twist;
It sows for knowledge, and it gathers pain;
Stakes all on love, and loses utterly.
Then, going down into the darker mist,
Naked, and blind, and blown with wind and rain,
It staggers out into eternity.

March 5, 1888.

THE NUN

She lies upon the cold ſtone of her cell,
And the night deepens ; and the night is chill.
Faſting and faint, she nerves her flagging will,
Remembering the inevitable hell.
Yet ſtill her lover's voice she hears too well,
And " Love, Love, Love," she hears and answers ſtill.
The Chriſt looms high againſt an angry hill,
Her heart and Love would roam a lowly dell.

Faſting and faint she lies. The shepherd Night
Leads the calm ſtars across his plains like sheep.
Earth slumbers. When shall slumber seal her eyes,
Who, crying with lamentations infinite,
" Heaven, heaven ! " yet, ineradicably deep,
Hides in her heart an alien Paradise ?

February 28, 1886.

THE OPIUM-SMOKER

I AM engulfed, and drown deliciously.
Soft music like a perfume, and sweet light
Golden with audible odours exquisite,
Swathe me with cerements for eternity.
Time is no more. I pause and yet I flee.
A million ages wrap me round with night.
I drain a million ages of delight.
I hold the future in my memory.

Also I have this garret which I rent,
This bed of straw, and this that was a chair,
This worn-out body like a tattered tent,
This crust, of which the rats have eaten part,
This pipe of opium; rage, remorse, despair;
This soul at pawn and this delirious heart.

January 1, 1887.

TO

KATHERINE WILLARD

PARIS : MAY, 1892.

PREFACE

BEING A WORD ON BEHALF OF PATCHOULI

An ingenuous reviewer once described some verses of mine as "unwholesome," because, he said, they had "a faint smell of Patchouli about them." I am a little sorry he chose Patchouli, for that is not a particularly favourite scent with me. If he had only chosen Peau d'Espagne, which has a subtle meaning, or Lily of the Valley, with which I have associations! But Patchouli will serve. Let me ask, then, in republishing, with additions, a collection of little pieces, many of which have been objected to, at one time or another, as being somewhat deliberately frivolous, why art should not, if it please, concern itself with the artificially charming, which, I suppose, is what my critic means by Patchouli? All art, surely, is a form of artifice, and thus, to the truly devout mind, condemned already, if not as actively noxious, at all events as needless. That is a point of view which I quite understand, and its conclusion I hold to be absolutely logical. I have the utmost respect for the people who refuse to read a novel, to go to the theatre, or to learn dancing. That is to have convictions and to live up to them. I understand also the point of view from which a work of art is tolerated in so far as it is actually militant on behalf of a religious or a moral idea. But what I fail to understand are those delicate, invisible degrees by which a distinction is drawn between this form of art and that: the hesitations, and compromises, and timorous advances, and shocked retreats, of the Puritan conscience once emancipated and yet afraid of liberty. However you may try to convince yourself to the contrary, a work of art can be judged only from two standpoints; the standpoint from which its art is measured entirely

by its morality, and the standpoint from which its morality is measured entirely by its art.

Here, for once, in connection with these "Silhouettes," I have not, if my recollection serves me, been accused of actual immorality. I am but a fair way along the "primrose path," not yet within singeing distance of the "everlasting bonfire." In other words, I have not yet written "London Nights," which, it appears (I can scarcely realise it, in my innocent abstraction in æsthetical matters), has no very salutary reputation among the blameless moralists of the press. I need not, therefore, on this occasion, concern myself with more than the curious fallacy by which there is supposed to be something inherently wrong in artistic work which deals frankly and lightly with the very real charm of the lighter emotions and the more fleeting sensations.

I do not wish to assert that the kind of verse which happened to reflect certain moods of mine at a certain period of my life, is the best kind of verse in itself, or is likely to seem to me, in other years, when other moods may have made me their own, the best kind of verse for my own expression of myself. Nor do I affect to doubt that the creation of the supreme emotion is a higher form of art than the reflection of the most exquisite sensation, the evocation of the most magical impression. I claim only an equal liberty for the rendering of every mood of that variable and inexplicable and contradictory creature which we call ourselves, of every aspect under which we are gifted or condemned to apprehend the beauty and strangeness and curiosity of the visible world.

Patchouli! Well, why not Patchouli? Is there any "reason in nature" why we should write exclusively about the natural blush if the delicately acquired blush of rouge has any attraction for us? Both exist: both, I think, are charming in their way: and the latter, as a subject, has, at all events, more novelty. If you prefer

your " new-mown hay " in the hayfield, and I, it may be, in a scent-bottle, why may not my individual caprice be allowed to find expression as well as yours? Probably I enjoy the hayfield as much as you do: but I enjoy quite other scents and sensations as well, and I take the former for granted, and write my poem, for a change, about the latter. There is no necessary difference in artistic value between a good poem about a flower in the hedge and a good poem about the scent in a sachet. I am always charmed to read beautiful poems about nature in the country. Only, personally, I prefer town to country; and in the town we have to find for ourselves, as best we may, the décor *which is the town equivalent of the great natural* décor *of fields and hills. Here it is that artificiality comes in: and if anyone sees no beauty in the effects of artificial light, in all the variable, most human, and yet most factitious town landscape, I can only pity him, and go on my own way.*

That is, if he will let me. But he tells me that one thing is right and the other is wrong; that one is good art and the other is bad; and I listen in amazement, sometimes not without impatience, wondering why an estimable personal prejudice should be thus exalted into a dogma, and uttered in the name of art. For in art there can be no prejudices, only results. If we are to save people's souls by the writing of verses, well and good. But if not, there is no choice but to admit an absolute freedom of choice. And if Patchouli pleases one why not Patchouli?

London, *February* 1896.

AT DIEPPE

I. AFTER SUNSET

The sea lies quieted beneath
The after-sunset flush
That leaves upon the heaped grey clouds
The grape's faint purple blush.

Pale, from a little space in heaven
Of delicate ivory,
The sickle-moon and one gold star
Look down upon the sea.

June 19, 1890.

II. ON THE BEACH

Night, a grey sky, a ghostly sea,
The soft beginning of the rain ;
Black on the horizon, sails that wane
Into the distance mistily.

The tide is rising, I can hear
The soft roar broadening far along ;
It cries and murmurs in my ear
A sleepy old forgotten song.

Softly the stealthy night descends,
The black sails fade into the sky :
Is not this, where the sea-line ends,
The shore-line of infinity ?

I cannot think or dream ; the grey
Unending waste of sea and night,
Dull, impotently infinite,
Blots out the very hope of day.

June 18, 1890.

III. RAIN ON THE DOWN

Night, and the down by the sea,
And the veil of rain on the down;
And she came through the mist and the rain to me
From the safe warm lights of the town.

The rain shone in her hair,
And her face gleamed in the rain;
And only the night and the rain were there
As she came to me out of the rain.

June 19, 1890.

IV. BEFORE THE SQUALL

The wind is rising on the sea,
The windy white foam-dancers leap ;
And the sea moans uneasily,
And turns to sleep and cannot sleep

Ridge after rocky ridge uplifts
Wild hands, and hammers at the land,
Scatters in liquid dust, and drifts
To death among the dusty sand.

On the horizon's nearing line,
Where the sky rests, a visible wall,
Grey in the offing, I divine
The sails that fly before the squall.

June 19, 1890.

V. UNDER THE CLIFFS

Bright light to windward on the horizon's verge;
To leeward, stormy shadows, violet-black,
And the wide sea between
A vast unfurrowed field of windless green;
The stormy shadows flicker on the track
Of phantom sails that vanish and emerge.

I gaze across the sea, remembering her;
I watch the white sun walk across the sea,
This pallid afternoon,
With feet that tread as whitely as the moon,
And in his fleet and shining feet I see
The footsteps of another voyager.

June 18, 1890.

VI. REQUIES

O is it death or life
That sounds like something strangely known
In this subsiding out of strife,
This slow sea-monotone?

A sound, scarce heard through sleep,
Murmurous as the August bees
That fill the forest hollows deep
About the roots of trees.

O is it life or death,
O is it hope or memory,
That quiets all things with this breath
Of the eternal sea?

June 20, 1890.

PASTEL: MASKS AND FACES

The light of our cigarettes
Went and came in the gloom:
It was dark in the little room.

Dark, and then, in the dark,
Sudden, a flash, a glow,
And a hand and a ring I know.

And then, through the dark, a flush
Ruddy and vague, the grace
(A rose!) of her lyric face.

Salon du Champ-de-Mars,
Paris, *May* 20, 1890.

EYES

Under the heaven of her brows'
Unclouded noon of peace, there lies
A leafy heaven of hazel boughs
In the seclusion of her eyes ;

Her troubling eyes that cannot rest ;
And there's a little flame that dances,
A firefly in a grassy nest,
In the green circle of her glances ;

A frolic faun that must be hid,
Shyly, in some fantastic shade,
Where pity droops a tender lid
On laughter of itself afraid.

Paris, Rouen, *June* 16, 1890.

MORBIDEZZA

White girl, your flesh is lilies,
Under a frozen moon,
So still is
The rapture of your swoon
Of whiteness, snow or lilies.

Virginal in revealment,
Your bosom's wavering slope,
Concealment,
In fainting heliotrope,
Of whitest white's revealment,

Is like a bed of lilies,
A jealous-guarded row,
Whose will is
Simply chaste dreams : but oh,
The alluring scent of lilies !

March 7, 1891.

MAQUILLAGE

The charm of rouge on fragile cheeks,
Pearl-powder, and, about the eyes,
The dark and lustrous eastern dyes ;
A voice of violets that speaks
Of perfumed hours of day, and doubtful night
Of alcoves curtained close against the light.

Gracile and creamy white and rose,
Complexioned like the flower of dawn,
Her fleeting colours are as those
That, from an April sky withdrawn,
Fade in a fragrant mist of tears away
When weeping noon leads on the altered day.

September 18, 1891.

IMPRESSION

TO M. C.

The pink and black of silk and lace,
Flushed in the rosy-golden glow
Of lamplight on her lifted face ;
Powder and wig, and pink and lace,

And those pathetic eyes of hers ;
But all the London footlights know
The little plaintive smile that stirs
The shadow in those eyes of hers.

Outside, the dreary church-bell tolled,
The London Sunday faded slow ;
Ah, what is this ? what wings unfold
In this miraculous rose of gold ?

January 4, 1894.

AN ANGEL OF PERUGINO

Have I not seen your face before
Where Perugino's angels stand
In those calm circles, and adore
With singing throat and lifted hand,

And pale hair folded crescent-wise,
About the placid forehead curled,
And the pale piety of eyes
Steadfast with peace upon the world?

I pause and watch you as you lean
Out of the doorway of your house,
With eyes grown happier to have seen
The Umbrian halo on your brows.

Paris, *June* 20, 1896.

AT FONTAINEBLEAU

It was a day of sun and rain,
Uncertain as a child's quick moods;
And I shall never pass again
So blithe a day among the woods.

The forest knew you and was glad,
And laughed for very joy to know
Her child was with her; then, grown sad,
She wept, because her child must go.

And you would spy and you would capture
The shyest flower that lit the grass;
The joy I had to watch your rapture
Was keen as even your rapture was.

The forest knew you and was glad,
And laughed and wept for joy and woe.
This was the welcome that you had
Among the woods of Fontainebleau.

Rouen, *June* 17, 1890.

ON THE HEATH

Her face's wilful flash and glow
Turned all its light upon my face
One bright delirious moment's space,
And then she passed; I followed slow

Across the heath, and up and round,
And watched the splendid death of day
Upon the summits far away,
And in her fateful beauty found

The fierce wild beauty of the light
That startles twilight on the hills,
And lightens all the mountain rills,
And flames before the feet of night.

October 7, 1890.

IN AN OMNIBUS

Your smile is like a treachery,
A treachery adorable;
So smiles the siren where the sea
Sings to the unforgetting shell.

Your fleeting Leonardo face,
Parisian Monna Lisa, dreams
Elusively, but not of streams
Born in a shadow-haunted place.

Of Paris, Paris is your thought,
Of Paris robes, and when to wear
The latest bonnet you have bought
To match the marvel of your hair.

Yet that fine malice of your smile,
That faint and fluctuating glint
Between your eyelids, does it hint
Alone of matters mercantile?

Close lips that keep the secret in,
Half spoken by the stealthy eyes,
Is there indeed no word to win,
No secret, from the vague replies

Of lips and lids that feign to hide
That which they feign to render up?
Is there, in Tantalus' dim cup,
The shadow of water, nought beside?

PARIS, *May* 15, 1890.

ON MEETING AFTER

Her eyes are haunted, eyes that were
Scarce sad when last we met.
What thing is this has come to her
That she may not forget?

They loved, they married: it is well!
But ah, what memories
Are these whereof her eyes half tell,
Her haunted eyes?

August 20, 1890.

IN BOHEMIA

Drawn blinds and flaring gas within,
And wine, and women, and cigars ;
Without, the city's heedless din ;
Above, the white unheeding stars.

And we, alike from each remote,
The world that works, the heaven that waits,
Con our brief pleasures o'er by rote,
The favourite pastime of the Fates.

We smoke, to fancy that we dream,
And drink, a moment's joy to prove,
And fain would love, and only seem
To live because we cannot love.

Draw back the blinds, put out the light !
'Tis morning, let the daylight come.
God ! how the women's cheeks are white,
And how the sunlight strikes us dumb !

January 17, 1892.

EMMY

Emmy's exquisite youth and her virginal air,
Eyes and teeth in the flash of a musical smile,
Come to me out of the past, and I see her there
As I saw her once for a while.

Emmy's laughter rings in my ears, as bright,
Fresh and sweet as the voice of a mountain brook,
And still I hear her telling us tales that night,
Out of Boccaccio's book.

There, in the midst of the villainous dancing-hall,
Leaning across the table, over the beer,
While the music maddened the whirling skirts of the ball,
As the midnight hour drew near,

There with the women, haggard, painted and old,
One fresh bud in a garland withered and stale,
She, with her innocent voice and her clear eyes, told
Tale after shameless tale.

And ever the witching smile, to her face beguiled,
Paused and broadened, and broke in a ripple of fun,
And the soul of a child looked out of the eyes of a child,
Or ever the tale was done.

O my child, who wronged you first, and began
First the dance of death that you dance so well?
Soul for soul: and I think the soul of a man
Shall answer for yours in hell.

BERLIN, *August* 3, 1891.

EMMY AT THE ELDORADO

To meet, of all unlikely things,
Here, after all one's wanderings!
But, Emmy, though we meet,
What of this lover at your feet?

For, is this Emmy that I see?
A fragile domesticity
I seem to half surprise
In the evasions of those eyes.

Once a child's cloudless eyes, they seem
Lost in the blue depths of a dream,
As though, for innocent hours,
To stray with love among the flowers.

Without regret, without desire,
In those old days of love on hire,
Child, child, what will you do,
Emmy, now love is come to you?

Already, in so brief a while,
The gleam has faded from your smile;
This grave and tender air
Leaves you, for all but one, less fair.

PARIS, *May* 11, 1892.

AT THE CAVOUR

Wine, the red coals, the flaring gas,
Bring out a brighter tone in cheeks
That learn at home before the glass
The flush that eloquently speaks.

The blue-grey smoke of cigarettes
Curls from the lessening ends that glow;
The men are thinking of the bets,
The women of the debts, they owe.

Then their eyes meet, and in their eyes
The accustomed smile comes up to call,
A look half miserably wise,
Half heedlessly ironical.

December 14, 1890.

IN THE HAYMARKET

I DANCED at your ball a year ago,
To-night I pay for your bread and cheese,
" And a glass of bitter, if you please,
For you drank my best champagne, you know ! "

Madcap ever, you laugh the while,
As you drink your bitter and munch your bread ;
The face is the same, and the same old smile
Came up at a word I said.

A year ago I danced at your ball,
I sit by your side in the bar to-night ;
And the luck has changed, you say that's all !
And the luck will change, you say : all right !

For the men go by, and the rent's to pay,
And you haven't a friend in the world to-day ;
And the money comes and the money goes :
And to-night, who cares ! and to-morrow, who knows ?

December 18, 1891.

AT THE LYCEUM

Her eyes are brands that keep the angry heat
Of fire that crawls and leaves an ashen path.
The dust of this devouring flame she hath
Upon her cheeks and eyelids. Fresh and sweet
In days that were, her sultry beauty now
Is pain transfigured, love's impenitence,
The memory of a maiden innocence,
As a crown set upon a weary brow.

She sits, and fain would listen, fain forget;
She smiles, but with those tragic, waiting eyes,
Those proud and piteous lips that hunger yet
For love's fulfilment. Ah, when Landry cries
"My heart is dead!" with what a wild regret
Her own heart feels the throb that never dies!

March 2, 1890.

THE BLIND BEGGAR

He stands, a patient figure, where the crowd
Heaves to and fro ; a sound is in his ears
As of a vexed sea roaring, and he hears
In darkness, as a dead man in his shroud.
Patient he stands, with age and sorrow bowed,
And holds a piteous hat of ancient years ;
And in his face and gesture there appears
The desperate humbleness of poor men proud.

What thoughts are his, as, with the inward sight,
He sees the glad unheeding Fair go by ?
Is the long darkness darker for that light,
And sorrow nearer when such mirth is nigh ?
Patient, alone, he stands from morn to night,
Pleading in his reproachful misery.

January 29, 1889.

THE OLD LABOURER

His fourscore years have bent a back of oak,
His earth-brown cheeks are full of hollow pits;
His gnarled hands wander idly as he sits
Bending above the hearthstone's feeble smoke.
Threescore and ten slow years he tilled the land;
He wrung his bread out of the stubborn soil;
He saw his masters flourish through his toil;
He held their substance in his horny hand.

Now he is old: he asks for daily bread:
He who has sowed the bread he may not taste
Begs for the crumbs: he would do no man wrong.
The Parish Guardians, when his case is read,
Will grant him, yet with no unseemly haste,
Just seventeen pence to starve on, seven days long.

June 29, 1890.

THE ABSINTHE-DRINKER

Gently I wave the visible world away.
Far off, I hear a roar, afar yet near,
Far off and strange, a voice is in my ear,
And is the voice my own? the words I say
Fall strangely, like a dream, across the day;
And the dim sunshine is a dream. How clear,
New as the world to lovers' eyes, appear
The men and women passing on their way!

The world is very fair. The hours are all
Linked in a dance of mere forgetfulness.
I am at peace with God and man. O glide,
Sands of the hour-glass that I count not, fall
Serenely: scarce I feel your soft caress,
Rocked on this dreamy and indifferent tide.

Aux Deux Magots,
Boulevard St. Germain,
Paris, *June* 5, 1890.

JAVANESE DANCERS

Twitched strings, the clang of metal, beaten drums,
Dull, shrill, continuous, disquieting;
And now the stealthy dancer comes
Undulantly with cat-like steps that cling;

Smiling between her painted lids a smile,
Motionless, unintelligible, she twines
Her fingers into mazy lines,
The scarves across her fingers twine the while.

One, two, three, four glide forth, and, to and fro,
Delicately and imperceptibly,
Now swaying gently in a row,
Now interthreading slow and rhythmically,

Still, with fixed eyes, monotonously still,
Mysteriously, with smiles inanimate,
With lingering feet that undulate,
With sinuous fingers, spectral hands that thrill

In measure while the gnats of music whirr,
The little amber-coloured dancers move,
Like painted idols seen to stir
By the idolators in a magic grove.

October–December, 1889.

LOVE IN SPRING

Good to be loved and to love for a little, and then
Well to forget, be forgotten, ere loving grow life!
Dear, you have loved me, but was I the man among men?
Sweet, I have loved you, but scarcely as mistress or wife.

Message of Spring in the hearts of a man and a maid,
Hearts on a holiday: ho! let us love: it is Spring.
Joy in the birds of the air, in the buds of the glade,
Joy in our hearts in the joy of the hours on the wing.

Well, but to-morrow? To-morrow, good-bye: it is over.
Scarcely with tears shall we part, with a smile who had met.
Tears? What is this? But I thought we were playing at lover.
Play-time is past. I am going. And you—love me yet!

December 21, 1889.

GIPSY LOVE

The gipsy tents are on the down,
The gipsy girls are here ;
And it's O to be off and away from the town
With a gipsy for my dear !

We'd make our bed in the bracken
With the lark for a chambermaid ;
The lark would sing us awake in the morning,
Singing above our head.

We'd drink the sunlight all day long
With never a house to bind us ;
And we'd only flout in a merry song
The world we left behind us.

We would be free as birds are free
The livelong day, the livelong day ;
And we would lie in the sunny bracken
With none to say us nay.

The gipsy tents are on the down,
The gipsy girls are here ;
And it's O to be off and away from the town
With a gipsy for my dear !

July 3, 1890.

IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

Under the almond tree,
Room for my love and me!
Over our heads the April blossom;
April-hearted are we.

Under the pink and white,
Love in her eyes alight;
Love and the Spring and Kensington Gardens:
Hey for the heart's delight!

Easter Sunday, *June* 13, 1892.

REWARDS

Because you cried, I kissed you, and,
Ah me! how should I understand
That piteous little you were fain
To cry and to be kissed again?

Because you smiled at last, I thought
That I had found what I had sought;
But soon I found, without a doubt,
No man can find a woman out.

I kissed your tears, and did not stay
Till I had kissed them all away;
Ah, hapless me! ah, heartless child!
She would not kiss me when she smiled.

June 13, 1890.

PERFUME

Shake out your hair about me, so,
That I may feel the stir and scent
Of those vague odours come and go
The way our kisses went.

Night gave this priceless hour of love,
But now the dawn steals in apace,
And amorously bends above
The wonder of your face.

"Farewell" between our kisses creeps,
You fade, a ghost, upon the air;
Yet ah! the vacant place still keeps
The odour of your hair.

September 20, 1891.

SOUVENIR

How you haunt me with your eyes !
Still that questioning persistence,
Sad and sweet, across the distance
Of the days of love and laughter,
Those old days of love and lies.

Not reproaching, not reproving,
Only, always, questioning,
Those divinest eyes can bring
Memories of certain summers,
Nights of dreaming, days of loving,

When I loved you, when your kiss,
Shyer than a bird to capture,
Lit a sudden heaven of rapture ;
When we neither dreamt that either
Could grow cold in heart like this.

Do you still, in love's December,
Still remember, still regret
That sweet unavailing debt ?
Ah, you haunt me, to remind me
You remember, I forget !

GOOD FRIDAY, 1892.

IN CARNIVAL

Out of the multitudinous hours
Of life sealed fast for us by fate
Are any hours that yet await
Our coming worthy to be ours ?

Life in her motley sheds in showers
The rose of hours still delicate,
But you and I have come too late
Into the Carnival of Flowers.

For us the roses are scarce sweet,
And scarcely swift the flying feet
Where masque to masque the moments call ;

All has been ours that we desired,
And now we are a little tired
Of the eternal carnival.

Fermain Bay, *May* 17, 1896.

LOVE IN DREAMS

I LIE on my pallet bed,
And I hear the drip of the rain;
The rain on my garret roof is falling,
And I am cold and in pain.

I lie on my pallet bed,
And my heart is wild with delight;
I hear her voice through the midnight calling,
As I lie awake in the night.

I lie on my pallet bed,
And I see her bright eyes gleam;
She smiles, she speaks, and the world is ended,
And made again in a dream.

July 8, 1890.

MUSIC AND MEMORY

TO K. W.

Across the tides of music, in the night,
Her magical face,
A light upon it as the happy light
Of dreams in some delicious place
Under the moonlight in the night.

Music, soft throbbing music in the night,
Her memory swims
Into the brain, a carol of delight;
The cup of music overbrims
With wine of memory, in the night.

Her face across the music, in the night,
Her face a refrain,
A light that sings along the waves of light,
A memory that returns again,
Music in music, in the night.

February 20, 1891.

SPRING TWILIGHT

TO K. W.

The twilight droops across the day,
I watch her portrait on the wall
Palely recede into the grey
That palely comes and covers all.

The sad Spring twilight, dull, forlorn,
The menace of the dreary night;
But in her face, more fair than morn,
A sweet suspension of delight.

March 5, 1891.

IN WINTER

Pale from the watery west, with the pallor of winter a-cold,
Rays of the afternoon sun in a glimmer across the trees ;
Glittering moist underfoot, the long alley. The firs, one by one,
Catch and conceal, as I saunter, and flash in a dazzle of gold
Lower and lower the vanishing disc ; and the sun alone sees
As I wait for my love in the fir-tree alley alone with the sun.

December 13, 1889.

QUEST

I CHASE a shadow through the night,
A shadow unavailingly ;
Out of the dark, into the light,
I follow, follow : is it she ?

Against the wall of sea outlined,
Outlined against the windows lit,
The shadow flickers, and behind
I follow, follow after it.

The shadow leads me through the night
To the grey margin of the sea ;
Out of the dark, into the light,
I follow unavailingly.

August 14, 1892.

TO A PORTRAIT

A PENSIVE photograph
Watches me from the shelf:
Ghost of old love, and half
Ghost of myself!

How the dear waiting eyes
Watch me and love me yet:
Sad home of memories,
Her waiting eyes!

Ghost of old love, wronged ghost,
Return, though all the pain
Of all once loved, long lost,
Come back again.

Forget not, but forgive!
Alas, too late I cry.
We are two ghosts that had their chance to live,
And lost it, she and I.

February 6, 1891.

SECOND THOUGHTS

When you were here, ah foolish then!
I scarcely knew I loved you, dear.
I know it now, I know it when
You are no longer here.

When you were here, I sometimes tired,
Ah me! that you so loved me, dear.
Now, in these weary days desired,
You are no longer here.

When you were here, did either know
That each so loved the other, dear?
But that was long and long ago:
You are no longer here.

November 14, 1893.

APRIL MIDNIGHT

Side by side through the streets at midnight,
Roaming together,
Through the tumultuous night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

Roaming together under the gaslight,
Day's work over,
How the Spring calls to us, here in the City,
Calls to the heart from the heart of a lover!

Cool the wind blows, fresh in our faces,
Cleansing, entrancing,
After the heat and the fumes and the footlights,
Where you dance and I watch your dancing.

Good it is to be here together,
Good to be roaming,
Even in London, even at midnight,
Lover-like in a lover's gloaming.

You the dancer and I the dreamer,
Children together,
Wandering lost in the night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

April 23, 1892.

DURING MUSIC

The music had the heat of blood,
A passion that no words can reach;
We sat together, and understood
Our own heart's speech.

We had no need of word or sign,
The music spoke for us, and said
All that her eyes could read in mine
Or mine in hers had read.

Dieppe, *June* 19, 1890.

ON THE BRIDGE

Midnight falls across hollow gulfs of night
As a stone that falls in a sounding well;
Under us the Seine flows through dark and light,
While the beat of time (hark!) is audible.

Lights on bank and bridge glitter gold and red,
Lights upon the stream glitter red and white;
Under us the night, and the night o'erhead,
We together, we alone together in the night.

Dieppe, *June* 21, 1890.

DREAMS

I DREAM of her the whole night long,
The pillows with my tears are wet.
I wake, I seek amid the throng
The courage to forget.

Yet still, as night comes round, I dread,
With unavailing fears,
The dawn that finds, beneath my head,
The pillows wet with tears.

May 14, 1889.

TEARS

O HANDS that I have held in mine,
That knew my kisses and my tears,
Hands that in other years
Have poured my balm, have poured my wine;

Women, once loved, and always mine,
I call to you across the years,
I bring a gift of tears,
I bring my tears to you as wine.

CARBIS BAY, *December* 3, 1893.

THE LAST EXIT

Our love was all arrayed in pleasantness,
A tender little love that sighed and smiled
At little happy nothings, like a child,
A dainty little love in fancy dress.

But now the love that once was half in play
Has come to be this grave and piteous thing,
Why did you leave me all the suffering
For all your memory when you went away?

You might have played the play out, O my friend,
Closing upon a kiss our comedy.
Or is it, then, a fault of taśte in me,
Who like no tragic exit at the end?

February 13, 1894.

AFTER LOVE

O to part now, and, parting now,
Never to meet again;
To have done for ever, I and thou,
With joy, and so with pain.

It is too hard, too hard to meet
If we must love no more;
Those other meetings were too sweet
That went before.

And I would have, now love is over,
An end to all, an end:
I cannot, having been your lover,
Stoop to become your friend!

July 13, 1890.

ALLA PASSERETTA BRUNA

If I bid you, you will come,
If I bid you, you will go,
You are mine, and so I take you
To my heart, your home ;
Well, ah, well I know
I shall not forsake you.

I shall always hold you fast,
I shall never set you free,
You are mine, and I possess you
Long as life shall last ;
You will comfort me,
I shall bless you.

I shall keep you as we keep
Flowers for memory, hid away,
Under many a newer token
Buried deep,
Roses of a gaudier day,
Rings and trinkets, bright and broken.

Other women I shall love,
Fame and fortune I may win,
But when fame and love forsake me
And the light is night above,
You will let me in,
You will take me.

January 15, 1891.

NOCTURNE

I MAY forget all mortal things,
But not that night, the dome of cloud,
The rattling wheels that made our whispers loud,
As heart-beats grew to whisperings ;
The long Embankment with its lights,
The pavement glittering with fallen rain,
The magic and the mystery that are night's,
And human love without the pain.

The river shook with wavering gleams,
That softly plunged through depths that lay
Impenetrable as the grave of day,
As near and far away as dreams.
A bright train flashed with all its squares
Of warm light where the bridge lay mistily.
The night was all about us : we were free,
Free of the day and all its cares !

That was an hour of bliss too long,
Too long to last where joy is brief.
Yet one escape of souls may yield relief
To many weary seasons' wrong.
" O last for ever ! " my heart cried ;
It ended : heaven was done.
I had been dreaming by her side
That heaven was but begun.

August 14, 1889.

THE STREET

I PASSED your ſtreet of many memories.
A sunset, sombre pink, the flush
Of inner rose-leaves idle fingers crush,
Died softly, as the rose that dies.
All the high heaven behind the roof lay thus,
Tenderly dying, touched with pain
A little ; ſtanding there I saw again
The sunsets that were dear to us.

I knew not if 'twere bitter or more sweet
To ſtand and watch the roofs, the sky.
O bitter to be there and you not nigh,
Yet this had been that blessed ſtreet.
How the name thrilled me, there upon the wall !
There was the house, the windows there
Againſt the rosy twilight high and bare,
The pavement-ſtones : I knew them all !

Days that have been, days that have fallen cold !
I ſtood and gazed, and thought of you,
Until remembrance sweet and mournful drew
Tears to eyes smiling as of old.
So, sad and glad, your memory visibly
Alive within my eyes, I turned ;
And, through a window, met two eyes that burned,
Tenderly queſtioning, on me.

November 5, 1889.

ON JUDGES' WALK

That night on Judges' Walk the wind
Was as the voice of doom;
The heath, a lake of darkness, lay
As silent as the tomb.

The vast night brooded, white with stars,
Above the world's unrest;
The awfulness of silence ached
Like a strong heart repressed.

That night we walked beneath the trees,
Alone, beneath the trees;
There was some word we could not say
Half uttered in the breeze.

That night on Judges' Walk we said
No word of all we had to say;
But now there shall be no word said
Before the Judge's Day.

January 15, 1891.

IN THE NIGHT

The moonlight had tangled the trees
Under our feet as we walked in the night,
And the shadows beneath us were stirred by the breeze
In the magical light;
And the moon was a silver fire,
And the stars were flickers of flame,
Golden and violet and red;
And the night-wind sighed my desire,
And the wind in the tree-tops whispered and said
In her ear her adorable name.

But her heart would not hear what I heard,
The pulse of the night as it beat,
Love, Love, Love, the unspeakable word,
In its murmurous repeat;
She heard the night-wind's sigh,
Nor her own name breathed in her ear,
Nor the cry of my heart to her heart,
A speechless, a clamorous cry:
"Love! Love! will she hear? will she hear?"
O heart, she will hear, by and by,
When we part, when for ever we part.

March 12, 1890.

CITY NIGHTS

I. IN THE TRAIN

The train through the night of the town,
Through a blackness broken in twain
By the sudden finger of streets;
Lights, red, yellow, and brown,
From curtain and window-pane,
The flashing eyes of the streets.

Night, and the rush of the train,
A cloud of smoke through the town,
Scaring the life of the streets;
And the leap of the heart again,
Out into the night, and down
The dazzling vista of streets!

II. IN THE TEMPLE

The grey and misty night,
Slim trees that hold the night among
Their branches, and, along
The vague Embankment, light on light.

The sudden, racing lights!
I can just hear, distinct, aloof,
The gaily clattering hoof
Beating the rhythm of festive nights.

The gardens to the weeping moon
Sigh back the breath of tears.
O the refrain of years on years
'Neath the weeping moon!

March 2, 1891.

A WHITE NIGHT

The yellow moon across the clouds
That shiver in the sky;
White, hurrying travellers, the clouds,
And, white and aching cold on high,
Stars in the sky.

Whiter, along the frozen earth,
The miracle of snow;
Close covered as for sleep, the earth
Lies, mutely slumbering below
Its shroud of snow.

Sleepless I wander in the night,
And, wandering, watch for day;
Earth sleeps, yet high in heaven the night
Awakens, faint and far away,
A phantom day.

Mayfield, *January* 15, 1892.

PEACE AT NOON

Here there is peace, cool peace,
Upon these heights, beneath these trees ;
Almost the peace of sleep or death,
To wearying brain, to labouring breath.

Here there is rest at last,
A sweet forgetting of the past ;
There is no future here, nor aught
Save this soft healing pause of thought.

October 3, 1890.

IN FOUNTAIN COURT

The fountain murmuring of sleep,
A drowsy tune;
The flickering green of leaves that keep
The light of June;
Peace, through a slumbering afternoon,
The peace of June.

A waiting ghost, in the blue sky,
The white curved moon;
June, hushed and breathless, waits, and I
Wait too, with June;
Come, through the lingering afternoon,
Soon, love, come soon.

June 11, 1891.

AT BURGOS

Miraculous silver-work in stone
Against the blue miraculous skies,
The belfry towers and turrets rise
Out of the arches that enthrone
That airy wonder of the skies.

Softly against the burning sun
The great cathedral spreads its wings;
High up, the lyric belfry sings.
Behold, Ascension Day begun
Under the shadow of those wings!

Burgos, *May* 7, 1891.

AT DAWN

She only knew the birth and death
Of days, when each that died
Was still at morn a hope, at night
A hope unsatisfied.

The dark trees shivered to behold
Another day begin;
She, being hopeless, did not weep
As the grey dawn came in.

February 3, 1890.

IN AUTUMN

Frail autumn lights upon the leaves
Beacon the ending of the year;
The windy rains are here,
Wet nights, and blowing winds about the eaves.

Here in the valley, mists begin
To breathe about the river side
The breath of autumn-tide;
The dark fields wait to take the harvest in.

And you, and you are far away.
Ah, this it is, and not the rain
Now loud against the pane,
That takes the light and colour from the day!

October 2, 1889.

ON THE ROADS

The road winds onward long and white,
It curves in mazy coils, and crooks
A beckoning finger down the height;
It calls me with the voice of brooks
To thirsty travellers in the night.

I leave the lonely city street,
The awful silence of the crowd;
The rhythm of the roads I beat,
My blood leaps up, I shout aloud,
My heart keeps measure with my feet.

A bird sings something in my ear,
The wind sings in my blood a song
'Tis good at times for a man to hear;
The road winds onward white and long,
And the best of Earth is here!

March 27, 1889.

PIERROT IN HALF-MOURNING

I, THAT am Pierrot, pray you pity me!
To be so young, so old in misery:
See me, and how the winter of my grief
Wastes me, and how I whiten like a leaf,
And how, like a lost child, lost and afraid,
I seek the shadow, I that am a shade,
I that have loved a moonbeam, nor have won
Any Diana to Endymion.
Pity me, for I have but loved too well
The hope of the too fair impossible.
Ah, it is she, she, Columbine: again
I see her, and I woo her, and in vain.
She lures me with her beckoning finger-tips;
How her eyes shine for me, and how her lips
Bloom for me, roses, roses, red and rich!
She waves to me the white arms of a witch
Over the world: I follow, I forget
All, but she'll love me yet, she'll love me yet!

January 13, 1891.

FOR A PICTURE OF WATTEAU

Here, the vague winds have reſt ;
The foreſt breathes in sleep,
Lifting a quiet breaſt ;
It is the hour of reſt.

How summer glides away !
An autumn pallor blooms
Upon the cheek of day.
Come, lovers, come away !

But here, where dead leaves fall
Upon the grass, what ſtrains,
Languidly musical,
Mournfully rise and fall ?

Light loves that woke with spring
This autumn afternoon
Beholds meandering,
Still, to the ſtrains of spring.

Your dancing feet are faint,
Lovers : the air recedes
Into a sighing plaint,
Faint, as your loves are faint.

It is the end, the end,
The dance of love's decease,
Feign no more now, fair friend,
It is the end, the end.

October 13, 1889.

LONDON NIGHTS

TO

PAUL VERLAINE

LONDON: MAY 6, 1895.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION OF LONDON NIGHTS (1897)

The publication of this book was received by the English press with a singular unanimity of abuse. In some cases the abuse was ignoble: for the most part, it was no more than unintelligent. Scarcely any critic did himself the credit of considering with any care the intention or the execution of what offended him by its substance or its subject. I had expected opposition, I was prepared for a reasonable amount of prejudice: but I must confess to some surprise at the nature of the opposition, the extent of the prejudice, which it was my fortune to encounter. Happening to be in France at the time, I reflected, with scarcely the natural satisfaction of the Englishman, that such a reception of a work of art would have been possible in no country but England.

And now, in bringing out a new edition of these poems, which I have neither taken from nor added to, and in which I have found it needful to make but little revision, it is with no hope of persuading anyone not already aware of what I have to say that I make this statement on behalf of general principles and my own application of them, but rather on Blake's theory, that you should tell the truth, not to convince those who do not believe, but to confirm those who do.

I have been attacked, then, on the ground of morality, and by people who, in condemning my book, not because it is bad art, but because they think it bad morality, forget that they are confusing moral and artistic judgments, and limiting art without aiding morality. I contend on behalf of the liberty of art, and I deny that morals have any right of jurisdiction over it. Art may be

served by morality: it can never be its servant. For the principles of art are eternal, while the principles of morality fluctuate with the spiritual ebb and flow of the ages. Show me any commandment of the traditional code of morals which you are at present obeying, and I will show you its opposite among the commandments of some other code of morals which your forefathers once obeyed: or, if you prefer, some righteous instance of its breaking, which you will commend in spite of yourself. Is it for such a shifting guide that I am to forsake the sure and constant leading of art, which tells me that whatever I find in humanity (passion, desire, the spirit or the senses, the hell or heaven of man's heart) is part of the eternal substance which nature weaves in the rough for art to combine cunningly into beautiful patterns? The whole visible world itself, we are told, is but a symbol, made visible in order that we may apprehend ourselves, and not be blown hither and thither like a flame in the night. How laughable is it, then, that we should busy ourselves, with such serious faces, in the commending or condemning, the permission or the exemption, of this accident or that, this or the other passing caprice of our wisdom or our folly as a due or improper subject for the "moment's monument" of a poem! It is as if you were to say to me, here on these weedy rocks of Rosses Point, where the grey sea passes me continually, flinging a little foam at my feet, that I may write of one rather than another of these waves, which are not more infinite than the moods of men.

The moods of men! There I find my subject, there the region over which art rules: and whatever has once been a mood of mine, though it has been no more than a ripple on the sea, and had no longer than that ripple's duration, I claim the right to render, if I can, in verse: and I claim, from my critics and my readers, the primary understanding, that a mood is after all but a mood, a ripple on the sea, and perhaps with no longer than that ripple's duration.

I do not profess that any poem in this book is the record of actual fact: I declare that every poem is the sincere attempt to render a particular mood which has once been mine, and to render it as if, for the moment, there were no other mood for me in the world. I have rendered, well or ill, many moods, and without disguise or preference. If it be objected to me that some of them were moods I had better never have felt, I am ready to answer, Possibly: but I must add, What of that? They have existed: and whatever has existed has achieved the right of artistic existence.

Rosses Point, Sligo, *September* 2, 1896.

PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE CURTAIN

We are the puppets of a shadow-play,
We dream the plot is woven of our hearts,
Passionately we play the selfsame parts
Our fathers have played passionately yesterday,
And our sons play to-morrow. There's no speech
In all desire, nor any idle word,
Men have not said and women have not heard;
And when we lean and whisper each to each
Until the silence quickens to a kiss
Even so the actor and the actress played
The lovers yesterday; when the lights fade
Before our feet, and the obscure abyss
Opens, and darkness falls about our eyes,
'Tis only that some momentary rage
Or rapture blinds us to forget the stage,
Like the wise actor, most in this thing wise.
We pass, and have our gesture; love and pain
And hope and apprehension and regret
Weave ordered lines into a pattern set
Not for our pleasure, and for us in vain.
The gesture is eternal: we who pass,
Pass on the gesture; we, who pass, pass on
One after one into oblivion,
As shadows dim and vanish from a glass.

January 7, 1896.

PROLOGUE

My life is like a music-hall,
Where, in the impotence of rage,
Chained by enchantment to my stall,
I see myself upon the stage
Dance to amuse a music-hall.

'Tis I that smoke this cigarette,
Lounge here, and laugh for vacancy,
And watch the dancers turn ; and yet
It is my very self I see
Across the cloudy cigarette.

My very self that turns and trips,
Painted, pathetically gay,
An empty song upon the lips
In make-believe of holiday :
I, I, this thing that turns and trips !

The light flares in the music-hall,
The light, the sound, that weary us ;
Hour follows hour, I count them all,
Lagging, and loud, and riotous :
My life is like a music-hall.

May 17, 1893.

TO A DANCER

Intoxicatingly
Her eyes across the footlights gleam,
(The wine of love, the wine of dream)
Her eyes, that gleam for me!

The eyes of all that see
Draw to her glances, stealing fire
From her desire that leaps to my desire;
Her eyes that gleam for me!

Subtly, deliciously,
A quickening fire within me, beat
The rhythms of her poising feet;
Her feet that poise to me!

Her body's melody,
In silent waves of wandering sound,
Thrills to the sense of all around,
Yet thrills alone for me?

And oh, intoxicatingly,
When, at the magic moment's close,
She dies into the rapture of repose,
Her eyes that gleam for me!

October 18, 1892.

RENÉE

Rain and the night, and the old familiar door,
And the archway dim, and the roadway desolate ;
Faces that pass, and faces, and more, yet more :
Renée ! come, for I wait.

Pallid out of the darkness, adorably white,
Pale as the spirit of rain, with the night in her hair,
Renée undulates, shadow-like, under the light,
Into the outer air.

Mournful, beautiful, calm with that vague unrest,
Sad with that sensitive, vaguely ironical mouth ;
Eyes that flame with the loveliest, deadliest
Fire of her passionate youth ;

Mournful, beautiful, sister of night and rain,
Elemental, fashioned of tears and fire,
Ever desiring, ever desired in vain,
Mother of vain desire ;

Renée comes to me, she the sorceress, Fate,
Subtly insensible, softly invincible, she :
Renée, who waits for another, for whom I wait,
To linger a moment with me.

July 28, 1892.

NORA ON THE PAVEMENT

As Nora on the pavement
Dances, and she entrances the grey hour
Into the laughing circle of her power,
The magic circle of her glances,
As Nora dances on the midnight pavement;

Petulant and bewildered,
Thronging desires and longing looks recur,
And memorably re-incarnate her,
As I remember that old longing,
A footlight fancy, petulant and bewildered;

There where the ballet circles,
See her, but ah! not free her from the race
Of glittering lines that link and interlace;
This colour now, now that, may be her,
In the bright web of those harmonious circles.

But what are these dance-measures,
Leaping and joyous, keeping time alone
With Life's capricious rhythm, and all her own,
Life's rhythm and hers, long sleeping,
That wakes, and knows not why, in these dance-measures?

It is the very Nora;
Child, and most blithe, and wild as any elf,
And innocently spendthrift of herself,
And guileless and most unbeguiled,
Herself at last, leaps free the very Nora.

It is the soul of Nora,
Living at last, and giving forth to the night,
Bird-like, the burden of its own delight,
All its desires, and all the joy of living,
In that blithe madness of the soul of Nora.

August 22, 1893.

VIOLET

I. PROEM

This was a sweet white wildwood violet
I found among the painted slips that grow
Where, under hot-house glass, the flowers forget
How the sun shines, and how the cool winds blow.

The violet took the orchid's colouring,
Tricked out its dainty fairness like the rest;
Yet still its breath was as the breath of Spring,
And the wood's heart was wild within its breast.

The orchid mostly is the flower I love,
And violets, the mere violets of the wood,
For all their sweetness, have not power to move
The curiosity that rules my blood.

Yet here, in this spice-laden atmosphere,
Where only nature is a thing unreal,
I found in just a violet, planted here,
The artificial flower of my ideal.

February 19, 1893.

II. CHRISTMAS-EVE

April-hearted Violet,
April with our love began ;
Winter comes, but April violets
Linger on.

So the fancy of an hour,
Born of sudden sun and shower,
Braves the winter, and has blossomed
Into flower.

December 25, 1892.

III. DECLARATION

Child, I will give you rings to wear,
And, if you love them, dainty dresses,
Flowers for your bosom and your hair,
And, if you love them, fond caresses ;

And I will give you of my days,
And I will leave, when you require it,
My dreams, my books, my wonted ways,
Content if only you desire it.

Take for your own my life, my art,
And for your love's sake I forgive you ;
I only ask you for your heart,
Because I have no heart to give you.

December 20, 1892.

IV. AT SEVENTEEN

You were a child, and liked me, yesterday.
To-day you are a woman, and perhaps
Those softer eyes betoken the sweet lapse
Of liking into loving: who shall say?
Only I know that there can be for us
No liking more, nor any kisses now,
But they shall wake sweet shame upon your brow
Sweetly, or in a rose calamitous.

Trembling upon the verge of some new dawn
You stand, as if awakened out of sleep,
And it is I who cried to you, "Arise!"
I who would fain call back the child that's gone,
And what you lost for me would have you keep,
Fearing to meet the woman of your eyes.

January 18, 1893.

V. CAPRICE

Her mouth is all of roses,
Her eyes are violets ;
And round her cheek at hide and seek
Love plays among the roses
That dimple on her cheek.

Her heart is all caprices,
Her will is yea and nay ;
And with a smile can she beguile
My heart to the caprices
That dance upon her smile.

Her looks are merely sunshine,
Her tears are only rain ;
But if she will I follow still
The flitting way of sunshine
Whatever way she will.

And if she will I love her,
And if she put me by,
Despite her will I follow still.
And will she let me love her ?
Ha, ha ! I think she will.

January 8, 1893.

VI. IN THE TEMPLE

When Violet comes I scarcely know
If Winter wraps the world in snow,
Or if 'tis Summer strikes a-glow
The fountain in the court below,
When Violet comes.
Her flower-like eyes, her soft lips bring
The warmth and welcome of the Spring,
And round my room, a fairy ring,
See violets, violets blossoming,
When Violet comes.

When Violet goes I hear again
The infinite despair of rain
Drip on my darkening window-pane
The tears of Winter on the wane,
When Violet goes.
Yet still about my lonely room
The visionary violets bloom,
And with her presence still perfume
The tedious page that I resume
When Violet goes.

January 1, 1893.

VII. ON THE STAGE

Lights, in a multicoloured mist,
From indigo to amethyst,
A whirling mist of multicoloured lights ;
And after, wigs and tights,
Then faces, then a glimpse of profiles, then
Eyes, and a mist again ;
And rouge, and always tights, and wigs, and tights.

You see the ballet so, and so,
From amethyst to indigo ;
You see a dance of phantoms, but I see
A girl, who smiles to me ;
Her cheeks, across the rouge, and in her eyes
I know what memories,
What memories and messages for me.

Paris, *May* 31, 1894.

VIII. AT THE STAGE-DOOR

Kicking my heels in the street,
Here at the edge of the pavement I wait for you, sweet,
Here in the crowd, the blent noises, blurred lights, of the street.

Under the archway sheer,
Sudden and black as a hole in the placarded wall,
Faces flicker and veer,
Wavering out of the darkness into the light,
Wavering back into night;
Under the archway, suddenly seen, the curls
And thin, bright faces of girls,
Roving eyes, and smiling lips, and the glance
Seeking, finding perchance,
Here at the edge of the pavement, there by the wall,
One face, out of them all.

Steadily, face after face,
Cheeks with the blush of the paint yet lingering, eyes
Still with their circle of black . . .
But hers, but hers?
Rose-leaf cheeks, and flower-soft lips, and the grace
Of the vanishing Spring come back,
And a child's heart blithe in the sudden and sweet surprise,
Subtly expectant, that stirs
In the smile of her heart to my heart, of her eyes to my eyes.

April 25, 1893.

IX. ON THE DOORSTEP

Midnight long is over-past
As we loiter, and the rain falls fast,
As we loiter on your doorstep,
And the rain falls fast.

Will the watchful mother hear:
As we whisper, is your mother near,
Keeping there behind the curtain
An attentive ear?

But we have so much to say,
As we linger, ere I go my way,
In the dark upon your doorstep,
We could talk till day.

There is no one in the street,
As I hold you in my arms, my sweet,
As I kiss you on your doorstep,
As I kiss you for good-night, my sweet.

February 19, 1893.

X. SONG

What are lips, but to be kissed ?
What are eyes, but to be praised ?
What the fineness of a wrist,
What the slimness of a waist ?
What the softness of her hair,
If not that Love be tangled there ?

What are lips, not to be kissed ?
What are eyes, not to be praised ?
What is she, that would resist
Love's desire to be embraced ?
What her heart, that will not dare
Suffer poor Love to linger there ?

These are lips, fond to be kissed,
These are eyes, fain to be praised ;
And I think, if Love has missed
Shelter in the wintry waste,
That this heart may soon prepare
Some nook for him to nestle there.

January 1, 1893.

XI. KISSES

Sweet, can I sing you the song of your kisses ?
How soft is this one, how subtle this is ;
How fluttering swift as a bird's kiss that is,
As a bird that taps at a leafy lattice ;
How this one clings and how that uncloses
From bud to flower in the way of roses ;
And this through laughter and that through weeping
Swims to the brim where Love lies sleeping ;
And this in a pout I snatch, and capture
That in the ecstasy of rapture
When the odorous red-rose petals part
That my lips may find their way to the heart
Of the rose of the world, your lips, my rose.
But no song knows
The way of my heart to the heart of my rose.

January 21, 1893.

XII. HESTERNA ROSA

When a girl's fancy flutters to a man,
It is but as a bird that flies and cries ;
She has a winged thing's April memories
Of sunshine, and the morning Spring began.

Love at her heart, importuning a tryst,
Finds in her senses little heed of it ;
But her bright lips most girlishly admit
The simple homeliness of being kissed.

Kiss and be friends, or, when the kissing closes,
Part, as we were together, merely friends ;
Why should we weep because the summer ends,
And some sweet moments ended with the roses ?

August 7, 1894.

DÉCOR DE THÉÂTRE

I. BEHIND THE SCENES: EMPIRE

To Peppina

The little painted angels flit,
See, down the narrow staircase, where
The pink legs flicker over it!

Blonde, and bewigged, and winged with gold,
The shining creatures of the air
Troop sadly, shivering with cold.

The gusty gaslight shoots a thin
Sharp finger over cheeks and nose
Rouged to the colour of the rose.

All wigs and paint, they hurry in:
Then, bid their radiant moment be
The footlights' immortality!

March 25, 1892.

II. THE PRIMROSE DANCE: TIVOLI

To Minnie Cunningham

Skirts like the amber petals of a flower,
A primrose dancing for delight
In some enchantment of a bower
That rose to wizard music in the night;

A rhythmic flower whose petals pirouette
In delicate circles, fain to follow
The vague aerial minuet,
The mazy dancing of the swallow;

A flower's caprice, a bird's command
Of all the airy ways that lie
In light along the wonder-land,
The wonder-haunted loneliness of sky:

So, in the smoke-polluted place,
Where bird or flower might never be,
With glimmering feet, with flower-like face,
She dances at the Tivoli.

March 20, 1892.

III. AT THE FORESTERS

The shadows of the gaslit wings
Come softly crawling down our way;
Before the curtain someone sings,
The music sounds from far away;
I stand beside you in the wings.

Prying and indiscreet, the lights
Illumine, if you chance to move,
The prince's dress, the yellow tights,
That fit your figure like a glove:
You shrink a little from the lights.

Divinely rosy rouged, your face
Smiles, with its painted little mouth,
Half tearfully, a quaint grimace;
The charm and pathos of your youth
Mock the mock roses of your face.

And there is something in your look
(Ambiguous, independent Flo!)
As teasing as a half-shut book;
It lures me till I long to know
The many meanings of your look:

The tired defiance of the eyes,
Pathetically whimsical,
Childish and whimsical and wise;
And now, relenting after all,
The softer welcome of your eyes.

April 8, 1892.

IV. LA MÉLINITE: MOULIN ROUGE

Olivier Metra's Waltz of Roses
Sheds in a rhythmic shower
The very petals of the flower;
And all its roses,
The rouge of petals in a shower.

Down the long hall the dance returning
Rounds the full circle, rounds
The perfect rose of lights and sounds,
The rose returning
Into the circle of its rounds.

Alone, apart, one dancer watches
Her mirrored, morbid grace;
Before the mirror, face to face,
Alone she watches
Her morbid, vague, ambiguous grace.

Before the mirror's dance of shadows
She dances in a dream,
And she and they together seem
A dance of shadows;
Alike the shadows of a dream.

The orange-rosy lamps are trembling
Between the robes that turn;
In ruddy flowers of flame that burn
The lights are trembling:
The shadows and the dancers turn.

And, enigmatically smiling,
In the mysterious night,
She dances for her own delight,
A shadow smiling
Back to a shadow in the night.

PARIS, *May* 22, 1892.

V. AT THE AMBASSADEURS

To Yvette Guilbert

That was Yvette. The blithe Ambassadeurs
Glitters, this Sunday of the Fête des Fleurs ;
Here are the flowers, too, living flowers that blow
A night or two before the odours go ;
And all the flowers of all the city ways
Are laughing, with Yvette, this day of days.
Laugh, with Yvette ? But I must first forget,
Before I laugh, that I have heard Yvette.
For the flowers fade before her : see, the light
Dies out of that poor cheek, and leaves it white ;
She sings of life, and mirth, and all that moves
Man's fancy in the carnival of loves ;
And a chill shiver takes me as she sings
The pity of unpitied human things.

Paris, *June* 19, 1894.

VI. AIR DE BALLET

To Cléo de Mérode

Why is it, child, you choose to wear
That artful 1830 air
Of artlessness made artifice?
To lure all lips to long to kiss
The saint-like halo of your hair?

"I am the spirit of a fan.
Ah, once, what wanton breezes ran
Across my silk and ivory!
As a fan's breath is life to me,
I have no heart for any man.

"As a fan fluttered by a wrist,
Bright lips that now are dust have kissed,
I waken, out of other hours,
The phantoms of forgotten flowers
That hold me to a phantom tryst.

"If these calm eyes, if that pure cheek,
If this soft haloed hair, could speak
The false, fantastic, final truth,
In some remote, remembered youth
I loved Gavarni for a week."

Dieppe, *August* 1896.

IN THE VALE OF LLANGOLLEN

In the fields and the lanes again!
There's a bird that sings in my ear
Messages, messages;
The green cool song that I long to hear.

It pipes to me out of a tree
Messages, messages;
This is the voice of the sunshine,
This is the voice of grass and the trees.

It is the joy of Earth
Out of the heaven of the trees:
The voice of a bird in the sunshine singing me
Messages, messages.

August 9, 1892.

AT CARBIS BAY

Out of the night of the sea,
Out of the turbulent night,
A sharp and hurrying wind
Scourges the waters white :
The terror by night.

Out of the doubtful dark,
Out of the night of the land,
What is it breathes and broods,
Hoveringly at hand ?
The menace of land.

Out of the night of heaven,
Out of the delicate sky,
Pale and serene the stars
In their silence reply :
The peace of the sky.

November 26, 1893.

AUTUMN TWILIGHT

The long September evening dies
In mist along the fields and lanes;
Only a few faint stars surprise
The lingering twilight as it wanes.

Night creeps across the darkening vale;
On the horizon tree by tree
Fades into shadowy skies as pale
As moonlight on a shadowy sea.

And, down the mist-enfolded lanes,
Grown pensive now with evening,
See, lingering as the twilight wanes,
Lover with lover wandering.

September 12, 1891.

COLOUR STUDIES

I. AT DIEPPE

To Walter Sickert

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,
Indefinitely desolate;
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,
The long hotel, acutely white,
Against the after-sunset light
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,
And means, to you and me, no more
Than any pebble on the shore,
Or this indifferent moment as it dies.

September 16, 1893.

II. AT GLAN-Y-WERN

White-robed against the threefold white
Of shutter, glass, and curtains' lace,
She flashed into the evening light
The brilliance of her gipsy face:
I saw the evening in her light.

Clear, from the soft hair to the mouth,
Her ardent face made manifest
The sultry beauty of the South:
Below, a red rose, climbing, pressed
Against the roses of her mouth.

So, in the window's threefold white,
O'ertrailed with foliage like a bower,
She seemed, against the evening light,
Among the flowers herself a flower,
A tiger-lily sheathed in white.

August 28, 1892.

III. ON CRAIG DHU

The sky through the leaves of the bracken,
Tenderly, pallidly blue,
Nothing but sky as I lie on the mountain-top.
Hark! for the wind as it blew,

Rustling the tufts of my bracken above me,
Brought from below
Into the silence the sound of the water.
Hark! for the oxen low,

Sheep are bleating, a dog
Barks at a farm in the vale:
Blue, through the bracken, softly enveloping,
Silence, a veil.

August 12, 1892.

IN THE MEADOWS AT MANTUA

But to have lain upon the grass
One perfect day, one perfect hour,
Beholding all things mortal pass
Into the quiet of green grass ;

But to have lain and loved the sun,
Under the shadow of the trees,
To have been found in unison,
Once only, with the blessed sun ;

Ah, in these flaring London nights,
Where midnight withers into morn,
How blissful a rebuke it writes
Across the sky of London nights !

Upon the grass at Mantua
These London nights were all forgot.
They wake for me again : but ah,
The meadow-grass at Mantua !

Milan, *May* 7, 1894.

ROSA MUNDI

An angel of pale desire
Whispered me in the ear
(Ah me, the white-rose mesh
Of the flower-soft, rose-white flesh!):
" Love, they say, is a fire:
Lo, the soft love that is here!

" Love, they say, is a pain
Infinite as the soul,
Ever a longing to be,
Love's, to infinity,
Ever a longing in vain
After a vanishing goal.

" Lo, the soft joy that I give
Here in the garden of earth;
Come where the rose-tree grows,
Thine is the garden's rose,
Weave rose-garlands, and live
In ease, in indolent mirth."

Then I saw that the rose was fair,
And the mystical rose afar,
A glimmering shadow of light,
Pales to a star in the night;
And the angel whispered " Beware,
Love is a wandering star.

" Love is a raging fire,
Choose thou content instead ;
Thou, the child of the dust,
Choose thou a delicate Lust."
" Thou hast chosen ! " I said
To the angel of pale desire.

January 27, 1894.

STELLA MARIS

Why is it I remember yet
You, of all women one has met
In random wayfare, as one meets
The chance romances of the streets,
The Juliet of a night? I know
Your heart holds many a Romeo.
And I, who call to mind your face
In so serene a pausing-place,
Where the bright pure expanse of sea,
The shadowy shore's austerity,
Seem a reproach to you and me,
I too have sought on many a breast
The ecstasy of love's unrest,
I too have had my dreams, and met
(Ah me!) how many a Juliet.
Why is it, then, that I recall
You, neither first nor last of all?
For, surely as I see to-night
The phantom of the lighthouse light,
Against the sky, across the bay,
Fade, and return, and fade away,
So surely do I see your eyes
Out of the empty night arise.
Child, you arise and smile to me
Out of the night, out of the sea,
The Nereid of a moment there,
And is it seaweed in your hair?

O lost and wrecked, how long ago,
Out of the drowning past, I know
You come to call me, come to claim
My share of your delicious shame.
Child, I remember, and can tell
One night we loved each other well,
And one night's love, at least or most,
Is not so small a thing to boast.
You were adorable, and I
Adored you to infinity,
That nuptial night too briefly borne
To the oblivion of morn.
Ah! no oblivion, for I feel
Your lips deliriously steal
Along my neck, and fasten there;
I feel the perfume of your hair,
I feel your breast that heaves and dips,
Desiring my desirous lips,
And that ineffable delight
When souls turn bodies, and unite
In the intolerable, the whole
Rapture of the embodied soul.

That joy was ours, we passed it by;
You have forgotten me, and I
Remember you thus strangely, won
An instant from oblivion.
And I, remembering, would declare
That joy, not shame, is ours to share,
Joy that we had the frank delight

To choose the chances of one night,
Out of vague nights, and days at ſtrife,
So infinitely full of life.
What shall it profit me to know
Your heart holds many a Romeo?
Why should I grieve, though I forget
How many another Juliet?
Let us be glad to have forgot
That roses fade, and loves are not,
As dreams, immortal, though they seem
Almoſt as real as a dream.
It is for this I see you rise,
A wraith, with ſtarlight in your eyes,
Where calm hours move, for such a mood
Solitude out of solitude;
For this, for this, you come to me
Out of the night, out of the sea.

Carbis Bay, *November* 30, 1893.

DAWN

Here in the little room
You sleep the sleep of innocent tired youth,
While I, in very sooth,
Tired, and awake beside you in the gloom,
Watch for the dawn, and feel the morning make
A loneliness about me for your sake.

You are so young, so fair,
And such a child, and might have loved so well;
And now, I cannot tell,
But surely one might love you anywhere,
Come to you as a lover, and make bold
To beg for that which all may buy with gold.

Your sweet, scarce lost, estate
Of innocence, the candour of your eyes,
Your childlike, pleased surprise,
Your patience: these afflict me with a weight
As of some heavy wrong that I must share
With God who made, and man who found you, fair.

January 17, 1893.

IDEALISM

I KNOW the woman has no soul, I know
The woman has no possibilities
Of soul or mind or heart, but merely is
The masterpiece of flesh: well, be it so
It is her flesh that I adore; I go
Thirsting afresh to drain her empty kiss.
I know she cannot love: it is not this
My vanquished heart implores in overthrow.
Tyrannously I crave, I crave alone,
Her perfect body, Earth's most eloquent
Music, divinest human harmony;
Her body now a silent instrument,
That 'neath my touch shall wake and make for me
The strains I have but dreamed of, never known.

LEVES AMORES

I

Your kisses, and the way you curl,
Delicious and distracting girl,
Into one's arms, and round about,
Luxuriously in and out
Twining inextricably, as twine
The clasping tangles of the vine ;
Strong to embrace and long to kiss,
And strenuous for the sharper bliss,
Insatiably enamoured of
The ultimate ecstasy of love.
So loving to be loved, so gay
And greedy for our holiday ;
And then how prettily you sleep !
You nestle close, and let me keep
My straying fingers in the nest
Of your warm comfortable breast ;
And as I lie and dream awake,
Unsleeping for your sleeping sake,
I feel the very pulse and heat
Of your young life-blood beat, and beat
With mine ; and you are mine, my sweet !

December 30, 1893.

II

The little bedroom papered red,
The gas's faint malodorous light,
And one beside me in the bed,
Who chatter, chatters, half the night.

I drowse and listen, drowse again,
And still, although I would not hear,
Her stream of chatter, like the rain,
Is falling, falling on my ear.

The bed-clothes stifle me, I ache
With weariness, my eyelids prick ;
I hate, until I long to break,
That clock for its tyrannic tick.

And still beside me, through the heat
Of this September night, I feel
Her body's warmth upon the sheet
Burn through my limbs from head to heel.

And still I see her profile lift
Its tiresome line above the hair,
That streams, a dark and tumbled drift
Across the pillow that I share.

September 29, 1890.

ROSA ALBA

The beauty of no woman to my flesh
Is intimate spirit if she be not pale ;
I love not roses that are dewy fresh
If on a cheek they tell no passionate tale ;
And passion is the after-sunset breath
That withers them, wrinkling their petals white ;
Also, since love is next of kin to death,
Let love foreshow the colours of that night.
There is a whiteness of thrice mortal fire,
And of this ardency immaculate,
Which is the seal of perfected desire,
The promise of desires yet passionate,
I would some ardent weariness should speak :
If not, I praise, but do not kiss, her cheek.

Rome, *January* 7, 1897.

HALLUCINATION : I

One petal of a blood-red tulip pressed
Between the pages of a Baudelaire :
No more ; and I was suddenly aware
Of the white fragrant apple of a breast
On which my lips were pastured ; and I knew
That dreaming I remembered an old dream,
Sweeter than any fruit that fruit did seem,
Which, as my hungry teeth devoured it, grew
Ever again, and tantalised my taste.
So, vainly hungering, I seemed to see
Eve and the serpent and the apple-tree,
And Adam in the garden, and God laying waste
Innocent Eden, because man's desire,
Godlike before, now for a woman's sake
Descended through the woman to the snake.
Then as my mouth grew parched, stung as with fire
By that white fragrant apple, once so fair,
That seemed to shrink and spire into a flame,
I cried, and wakened, crying on your name :
One blood-red petal stained the Baudelaire.

October 13, 1906.

HALLUCINATION : II

Is it your face, is it a dream ?
Your face I dream in such a mist
Of rosy gold and amethyst ?
Is it your eyes that flicker and gleam
Like mocking stars beneath the shade
Of leafy hair that seems to have curled
Its tendrils to blot out the world ?
Dreams are the truth : let the world fade !
And these warm spires of heat that rise
Out of my heart into my brain
Are they not flames lighted in vain
At the enchantment of your eyes ?
I shudder with the fear of hope,
Giddy expectancy consumes
My senses ; but what breath perfumes
The air with scents of heliotrope ?
I sicken with a wild desire,
I drown in sweetness, till it seems
Or if the after-taste of dreams
Came back into my mouth like fire.

Paris, *June* 27, 1895.

HANDS

To Marcelle

The little hands too soft and white
To have known more laborious hours
Than those which die upon a night
Of kindling wine and fading flowers ;

The little hands that I have kissed,
Finger by finger, to the tips,
And delicately about each wrist
Have set a bracelet with my lips ;

Dear soft white little morbid hands,
Mine all one night, with what delight
Shall I recall in other lands,
Dear hands, that you were mine one night !

Paris, *May* 17, 1894.

MAUVE, BLACK, AND ROSE

To Marcelle

Mauve, black, and rose,
The veils of the jewel, and she, the jewel, a rose.

First, the pallor of mauve,
A soft blood flowing about the body I love.

Then, the flush of the rose,
A hedge of roses about the mystical rose.

Last, the black, and at last
The feet that I love, and the way that my love has passed.

Paris, *May* 17, 1894.

FLORA OF THE EDEN: ANTWERP

Eyes that sought my eyes, an-hungered, as a fire;
Hands that sought and caught my hands in their desire;
Hands and eyes that clipt and lipt me as a hungering fire!

But I turned away from your ecstatic eyes,
But my heart was silent to your eager sighs,
But I turned to other eyes from your imploring eyes.

Hands that I rejected, you were fain to give;
Eyes that for their moment loved me, as I live;
Mouth that kissed me: Flora of the Eden, O forgive!

August 30, 1893.

WHITE HELIOTROPE

The feverish room and that white bed,
The tumbled skirts upon a chair,
The novel flung half-open, where
Hat, hair-pins, puffs, and paints are spread;

The mirror that has sucked your face
Into its secret deep of deeps,
And there mysteriously keeps
Forgotten memories of grace;

And you half dressed and half awake,
Your slant eyes strangely watching me,
And I, who watch you drowsily,
With eyes that, having slept not, ache;

This (need one dread? nay, dare one hope?)
Will rise, a ghost of memory, if
Ever again my handkerchief
Is scented with White Heliotrope.

June 20, 1893.

TO MURIEL: AT THE OPERA

Roses and rosebuds, red and white,
Nestle between your breasts to-night,
And, lying there with drowsy breath,
Sweetly resigned themselves to death.
Ah, cruel child! that would not so
Suffer the perfumed life to go,
But, hungering for the rose's heart
Of midmost sweetness, plucked apart
Petal from petal: "Ah!" you said
(With lips that kissed white roses red),
"To live on love and roses!"

Well,
But if the rose were Muriel?

November 14, 1892.

I. VENETA MARINA

The masts rise white to the stars,
White on the night of the sky,
Out of the water's night,
And the stars lean down to them white.
Ah! how the stars seem nigh;
How far away are the stars!

And I too under the stars,
Alone with the night again,
And the water's monotone;
I and the night alone,
And the world and the ways of men.
Farther from me than the stars.

Venice, *March* 25, 1894.

II. SERATA DI FESTA

Here in a city made for love
I wander loveless and alone,
Longing for the unknown,
Desiring one thing only, and above
Desire in love with love.

The beauty of the starlight dies
Over the city, as a flower
Droops, an unheeded hour ;
Ah ! barren beauty, when no lovelier eyes
Behold it as it dies.

I wander loveless and alone,
Alone with memory : she sings
Of other wanderings ;
Of London nights, thrice-happy, had I known
What 'tis to be alone.

Had I but known ! Could I but know
If here, or here, for surely here
The answer waits my ear,
Some lips my lips, some hands my hands ; but oh,
Could these, could I, but know !

We seek each other, can I doubt ?
For man is man, and woman kind,
And he who seeks shall find,
World without end ; but how to ravel out
The inextricable doubt ?

I am a shipwrecked sailor, lost
For lack of water on the sea :
Water, but none for me ;
Water, but I, thirsting and fever-tossed,
In much abundance lost.

April 12, 1894.

III. ALLA DOGANA

Night, and the silence of the night,
In Venice; far away, a song;
As if the lyric water made
Itself a serenade;
As if the water's silence were a song
Sent up into the night.

Night, a more perfect day,
A day of shadows luminous,
Water and sky at one, at one with us;
As if the very peace of night,
The older peace than heaven or light,
Came down into the day.

March 23, 1894.

IV. ZULIA

Zulia, my little cat,
I like you, not for this or that,
But just because you seem to be,
My Zulia, made for me.

If Zulia had a soul,
Why should I care to claim control?
But no such needless longings stir
That vivid peace in her.

Zulia, you love, I know,
The amber shawl that suits you so;
And then how could one but be vain
Of such a ring and chain?

You love to dream, and feel
So good, in church, because you kneel;
You love to dream of lovers, ah!
In Toni's gondola.

You little Japanese,
Made to be pleased, and made to please,
So quaint and smiling, and so small
A dainty animal;

You know that life's a game,
And blanks and prizes just the same,
And all we have to do is, play
The game out, day by day.

Zulia

Zulia, those eyes were meant
But to be sunnily content;
And those small kiss-curls, one by one,
Kissed over, in the sun.

I kiss them now to-night,
Dear, if you knew with what delight,
You must needs know (and God forbid
My Zulia ever did!).

How one may prejudice
The very honey of a kiss,
When women catch, and men may not control,
The new disease of soul.

April 1, 1894.

V. ALLE ZATTERE

Only to live, only to be
In Venice, is enough for me.
To be a beggar, and to lie
At home beneath the equal sky,
To feel the sun, to drink the night,
Had been enough for my delight;
Happy because the sun allowed
The luxury of being proud
Not to some only; but to all
The right to lie along the wall.
Here my ambition dies; I ask
No more than some half-idle task,
To be done idly, and to fill
Some gaps of leisure when I will.
I care not if the world forget
That it was ever in my debt;
I care not where its prizes fall;
I long for nothing, having all.
The sun each morning, on his way,
Calls for me at the Zattere;
I wake and greet him, I go out,
Meet him, and follow him about;
We spend the day together, he
Goes to bed early; as for me,
I make the moon my mistress, prove
Constant to my inconstant love,
For she is coy with me, will hie
To my arms amorously and fly

Ere I have kissed her ; ah ! but she
She it is, to eternity,
I adore only ; and her smile
Bewilders the enchanted isle
To more celestial magic, glows
At once the crystal and the rose.
The crazy lover of the moon,
I hold her, on the still lagoon,
Sometimes I hold her in my arms ;
'Tis her cold silver kiss that warms
My blood to singing, and puts fire
Into the heart of my desire.
And all desire in Venice dies
To such diviner lunacies.
Life dreams itself : the world goes on,
Oblivious, in oblivion ;
Life dreams itself, content to keep
Happy immortality, in sleep.

March 23, 1894.

TO ONE IN ALIENATION

I

Last night I saw you decked to meet
The coming of those most reluctant feet :
The little bonnet that you wear
When you would fain, for his sake, be more fair ;
The primrose ribbons that so grace
The perfect pallor of your face ;
The dark gown folded back about the throat,
And folds of lacework that denote
All that beneath them, just beneath them lies :
God, for *his* eyes !

So the man came and took you ; and we lay
So near and yet so far away,
You in his arms, awake for joy, and I
Awake for very misery,
Cursing a sleepless brain that would but scrawl
Your image on the aching wall,
That would but pang me with the sense
Of that most sweet accursed violence
Of lovers' hands that weary to caress
(Those hands !) your unforbidden loveliness.

And with the dawn that vision came again
To an unrested and recurrent brain :
To think your body, warm and white,
Lay in his arms all night ;

That it was given him to surprise,
With those unhallowed eyes,
The secrets of your beauty, hid from me,
That I may never (may I never ?) see :
I who adore you, he who finds in you
(Poor child !) a half-forgotten point of view.

July 14, 1892.

II

As I lay on the stranger's bed,
And clasped the stranger-woman I had hired,
Desiring only memory dead
Of all that I had once desired ;

It was then that I wholly knew
How dearly I had loved you, my lost friend ;
While I am I, and you are you,
How I must love you to the end.

For I lay in her arms awake,
Awake and cursing the indifferent night,
That ebbed so slowly, for your sake,
My heart's desire, my soul's delight ;

For I lay in her arms awake,
Awake in such a solitude of shame,
That when I kissed her, for your sake,
My lips were sobbing on your name.

July 31, 1892.

NERVES

The modern malady of love is nerves.
Love, once a simple madness, now observes
The stages of his passionate disease,
And is twice sorrowful because he sees,
Inch by inch entering, the fatal knife.
O health of simple minds, give me your life,
And let me, for one midnight, cease to hear
The clock for ever ticking in my ear,
The clock that tells the minutes in my brain.
It is not love, nor love's despair, this pain
That shoots a witless, keener pang across
The simple agony of love and loss.
Nerves, nerves! O folly of a child who dreams
Of heaven, and, waking in the darkness, screams.

November 27, 1897.

MADRIGAL : I

May we not love as others do,
Dearest, because we love,
A mistress I, a husband you ?
Nay, our delights must prove
Either the double or the part
Of those who love with single heart.

Sweet friend, I find not any wrong
In your divided soul ;
Nor you, that mine should not belong
Entire to one control.
Let simple lovers if they will
Contemn us, we outwit them still.

For small and poor and cold indeed
Is any heart that can
Hold but the measure of the need,
The joy, of any man.
Both spare and prodigal were we,
To love but you, to love but me.

January 3, 1893.

MADRIGAL: II

I PUT my soul into your eyes;
I looked, and saw, and did not see
My own soul looking back at me;
I saw my soul without surprise
Look from your eyes.

I take my soul away from you;
I see you now, and seeing prove
How steadfast and how blind is love;
I love: what has the soul to do
With loving you?

January 13, 1897.

CÉLESTE

I. THE PRELUDE

Child, in those gravely smiling eyes,
What memory sits apart and hears
A litany of low replies,
Love's music, in a lover's ears ?

Love in your heart, a guest unsought,
Unfeared, and never known for Love,
Softer than music to the thought,
Sings in an unknown tongue of love.

May 3, 1893.

II. BEFORE MEETING

I know not how our eyes first met,
I only know that, night by night,
For one long instant we forget
All but our instant of delight.

Child, I had never heard you speak,
I know not of your face by day,
Nor if the rose upon your cheek
With night's spent roses faints away.

So far apart from me you seem,
Ever about to be so near,
I must have dreamed you in some dream,
I do but dream that you are here.

Well, no awakening may there be!
I look to you in fairy-land,
From fairy-land you look to me,
We smile, and seem to understand.

November 20, 1894.

III. AFTER MEETING

Now that we have met at last,
Long desired!
We who, waiting, never tired,
All the past,

We who waited for to-day,
You and I,
Seeing Fortune pass us by,
On her way,

Now our love has grown with years
Three years old,
We remember and behold
Hopes and fears

Like a dream that having been
Fades and flies,
As I look into your eyes,
O my queen!

And I hold your hand for sign,
And you smile,
As if always, all the while,
You were mine;

And we seem to know each other
Far too well
To have anything to tell
One another.

After Meeting

All was said and overpast
Long ago ;
We who love each other so
Meet at last.

July 22, 1894.

IV. FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE

Under the shadow of the trees
We sat together, you and I;
Our hearts were sweetly ill at ease
Under the shadow of the trees.

In the green circle of the grass
We saw the fairies passing by;
The wake, the fairy wake it was,
Upon the circle of green grass.

And softly with their fairy chain
They wove a circle round about,
And round our hearts; ah, not in vain
They bound us with their fairy chain!

With shadowy bonds they bound us fast,
They wove their circle in and out;
Ah, Céleste, when the fairies passed,
With what strong bonds they bound us fast!

July 30, 1894.

V. LOVE'S PARADOX

Once I smiled when I saw you, when I saw you smile I was glad,
And the joy of my heart was as foam that the sea-wind shakes from the sea ;
But the smile of your eyes grows strange, and the smile that my lips have had
Trembles back to my heart, and my heart trembles in me.

Once you laughed when you met me, when you met me your voice was gay
As the voice of a bird in the dawn of the day on a sunshiny tree ;
But the sound of your voice grows strange, and the words that you do not say
Thrill from your heart to mine, and my heart trembles in me.

August 7, 1894.

VI. THE KISS

THERE's a tune in my head to-night,
As I walk, as I talk,
And it swoons in a whirl of light
(While the day fades away)
And I hear my heart as it beats
A refrain, and again
I am splashed by the mud of the streets,
And again feel the rain.

I am hushed, and I listen, and move
Far apart, to her heart,
I am lost in the arms of her love;
Then I hear, in my ear,
Oh, what voices of men that seem
Scarce amiss to my bliss,
For I walk in a dream (a dream?
Is it this?) of her kiss!

August 12, 1894.

VII. WHITE MAGIC

Against the world I closed my heart,
And, half in pride and half in fear,
I said to Love and Lust: Depart,
None enters here.

A gipsy witch has glided in,
She takes her seat beside my fire;
Her eyes are innocent of sin,
Mine of desire.

She holds me with an unknown spell,
She folds me in her heart's embrace;
If this be love, I cannot tell:
I watch her face.

Her sombre eyes are happier
Than any joy that e'er had voice;
Since I am happiness to her,
I too rejoice.

And I have closed the door again,
Against the world I close my heart;
I hold her with my spell; in vain
Would she depart.

I hold her with a surer spell,
Beyond her magic, and above:
If hers be love, I cannot tell,
But mine is love.

August 14, 1894.

VIII. LOVE'S SECRET

As a most happy mother feels the stir
Of that new life which quickens with her life,
And knows that virtue has gone forth from her
To doubly sanctify the name of wife;
Yet, for her joy's sake, and because her pride
Is too unutterably sanctified,
And all the heaven of heavens within her breast
Too dearly and too intimately possessed,
Speaks not a word, but folds her new delight
With a rapt silence, comforting as night;
So, when I felt the quickening life that came
To bid my life's long-slumbering currents move,
I set the seal of silence on your name,
And, for my love's sake, never told my love.

August 19, 1894.

IX. DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI

I did not know ; child, child, I did not know,
Who now in lonely wayfare go,
Who wander lonely of you, O my child,
And by myself exiled.
I did not know, but, O white soul of youth,
So passionate of truth,
So amorous of duty, and so strong
To suffer, not to suffer wrong,
Is there for me no pity, who am weak ?
Spare me this silence, speak !
I did not know : I wronged you ; I repent :
But will you not relent ?
Must I still wander, outlawed, and go on
The old weary ways alone,
As in the old, intolerable days
Before I saw your face,
The doubly darkened ways since you withdraw
Your light, that was my law ?
I charge you by your soul, pause, ere you hurl
Sheer to destruction, girl,
A poor soul that had midway struggled out,
Still midway clogged about,
And for love of you had turned his back
Upon the miry track,
That had been as a grassy wood-way, dim
With violet-beds, to him.
I wronged you, but I loved you ; and to me
Your love was purity ;

De Profundis Clamavi

I rose, because you called me, and I drew
Nearer to God, in you.
I fall, and if you leave me, I must fall
To that last depth of all,
Where not the miracle of even your eyes
Can bid the dead arise.
I charge you that you save not your own sense
Of lilied innocence,
By setting, at the roots of that fair stem,
A murdered thing, to nourish them.

August 26, 1894.

X. LOVE IN AUTUMN

It is already Autumn, and not in my heart only,
The leaves are on the ground,
Green leaves untimely browned,
The leaves bereft of Summer, my heart of Love left lonely.

Swift, in the masque of seasons, the moment of each mummer,
And even so fugitive
Love's hour, Love's hour to live:
Yet, leaves, ye have had your rapture, and thou, poor heart,
thy Summer!

September 2, 1894.

XI. A PRAYER TO SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

Saint Anthony of Padua, whom I bear
In effigy about me, hear my prayer:
Kind saint who findest what is lost, I pray,
Bring back her heart: I lost it yesterday.

September 7, 1894.

VARIATIONS UPON LOVE

I

For God's sake, let me love you, and give over
These tedious protestations of a lover ;
We're of one mind to love, and there's no let :
Remember that, and all the rest forget.
And let's be happy, mistress, while we may,
Ere yet to-morrow shall be called to-day.
To-morrow may be heedless, idle-hearted :
One night's enough for love to have met and parted.
Then be it now, and I'll not say that I
In many several deaths for you would die ;
And I'll not ask you to declare that you
Will longer love than women mostly do.
Leave words to them whom words, not doings, move,
And let our silence answer for our love.

September 29, 1893.

II

Oh, woman ! I am jealous of the eyes
That look upon you ; all my looks are spies
That do but lurk and follow you about,
Restless to find some guilty secret out.
I am unhappy if I see you not,
Unhappy if I see you ; tell me what
That smile betokens ; what close thing is hid
Beneath the half-way lifting of a lid ?

Who is it, tell me, I so dread to meet,
Just as we turn the corner of the street?
Daily I search your baffling eyes to see
Who knows what new admitted company?
And, sick with dread to find the thing I seek,
I tremble at the name you do not speak.

January 20, 1895.

III

I KNOW your lips are bought like any fruit;
I know your love, and of your love the root;
I know your kisses toll for love that dies
In kissing, to be buried in your eyes;
I know I am degraded for your sake,
And that my shame will not so much as make
Your glory, or be reckoned in the debt
Of memories you are mindful to forget.
All this I know, and, knowing it, I come
Delighted to my daily martyrdom;
And, rich in love beyond the common store,
Become for you a beggar, to implore
The broken crumbs that from your table fall,
Freely, in your indifference, on all.

January 12, 1893.

IV

I LOVED her; and you say she loved me not.
Well, if I loved her? And if she forgot,
Well, I have not forgotten even yet:
Time, and spent tears, may teach me to forget.
And so she loves another, and did then
When she was heaven and earth to me, and when,
Truly, she made me happy. It may be:
I only know how good she was to me.
Friend, to have loved, to have been made happy thus,
What better fate has life in store for us,
The dream of life from which we have to wake,
Happier, why not? why not for a dream's sake?
To have been loved is well, and well enough
For any man: but 'tis enough to love.

DIEPPE, *September* 14, 1893.

MAGNIFICAT

Praise God, who wrought for you and me
Your subtle body made for love ;
God, who from all eternity
Willed our divided ways should move
Together, and our love should be.

I wandered all these years among
A world of women, seeking you.
Ah, when our fingers met and clung,
The pulses of our bodies knew
Each other : our hearts leapt and sung.

It was not any word of mine,
It was not any look of yours ;
Only we knew, and knew for sign
Of Love that comes, Love that endures,
Our veins the chalice of his wine.

Because God willed for us and planned
One perfect love, excelling speech
To tell, or thought to understand,
He made our bodies each for each,
Then put your hand into my hand.

March 27, 1895.

GIFTS

It was not for your heart I sought,
But you, dear foolish maid, have brought
Only your heart to me.
Ah, that so rare a gift should be
The gift I wanted not!

I asked a momentary thing,
But 'tis eternity you bring;
And, with ingenuous eyes,
You offer, as the lesser prize,
This priceless offering.

Oh what, in Love's name, shall I do,
Who have both lost and captured you?
You will but love me: so,
Since I too cannot let you go,
I can but love you too.

March 19, 1895.

SONG

Her eyes say Yes, her lips say No.
Ah, tell me, Love, when she denies,
Shall I believe the lips or eyes?
Bid eyes no more dissemble,
Or lips too tremble
The way her heart would go!

Love may be vowed by lips, although
Cold truth, in unsurrendering eyes,
The armistice of lips denies.
But can fond eyes dissemble.
Or false lips tremble
To this soft Yes in No?

March 24, 1895.

HEART'S DESIRE

Now that the dream is vanished, and the night is fled,
And doubt is mine no more, now my desire is mine,
I hunger for the sped delight that dawn has banished,
Dawn my desire: O fool! the night was more divine.

In sorrow did I languish, and have I not shed
Tears for untasted joys that did immortal seem?
Now hope, with fear, lies dead, and passion, with its anguish:
O, give me back my doubt again, and let me dream!

August 1, 1894.

CLAIR DE LUNE

In the moonlit room your face,
Moonlight-coloured, fainting white,
And the silence of the place
Round about us in the night,
And my arms are round about you
In the silence of the night.

Lips that are not mine to kiss,
Lips how often kissed in vain,
Broken seal of memories,
Where the kisses come again
That the lips of all your lovers
Laid upon your lips in vain ;

Eyes that are not mine to keep
In the mirror of mine eyes,
Where I tremble lest from sleep
Other ghosts should re-arise ;
Why enthrall me with your magic,
Haunting lips, triumphant eyes ?

For the silence of the night
Swims around me like a stream,
And your eyes have caught the light
Of a moon-enchanted dream,
And your arms glide round about me,
And I fade into a dream.

Paris, *July* 2, 1893.

PARIS

My Paris is a land where twilight days
Merge into violent nights of black and gold ;
Where, it may be, the flower of dawn is cold :
Ah, but the gold nights, and the scented ways !

Eyelids of women, little curls of hair,
A little nose curved softly, like a shell,
A red mouth like a wound, a mocking veil :
Phantoms, before the dawn, how phantom-fair !

And every woman with beseeching eyes,
Or with enticing eyes, or amorous,
Offers herself, a rose, and craves of us
A rose's place among our memories.

Paris, *May* 29, 1894.

IN THE SANCTUARY AT SARONNO

Has not Luini writ in fire
The secret of our own desire?
Your eyelids heavy with the sense
Of some strange passionate suspense,
And your mouth subtly hungering
Who knows for what forbidden thing?
Yea, and my longings that would pierce
The obscure dividing universe,
To die into your heaven of love;
Our passion, and the end thereof,
Love, even to the death of love.
You were this martyr, I the saint
For whom your aching eyelids faint
In this pretence of chastity.
The mystic spousal that shall be
Betwixt your Lord and you, divine
And deathless, does but symbol mine;
Bride of my ultimate desires,
And equal flamelike with my fires!

This did Luini once record,
Unto the glory of the Lord,
And for us chiefly, and for all,
Upon the sanctuary wall.

Milan, *May* 9, 1894.

BIANCA

I. BIANCA

Her cheeks are hot, her cheeks are white;
The white girl hardly breathes to-night,
So faint the pulses come and go,
That waken to a smouldering glow
The morbid faintness of her white.

What drowsing heats of sense, desire
Longing and languorous, the fire
Of what white ashes, subtly mesh
The fascination of her flesh
Into a breathing web of fire?

Only her eyes, only her mouth,
Live, in the agony of drouth,
Athirst for that which may not be:
The desert of virginity
Aches in the hotness of her mouth.

I take her hands into my hands,
Silently, and she understands;
I set my lips upon her lips;
Shuddering to her finger-tips
She strains my hands within her hands.

I set my lips on hers; they close
Into a false and phantom rose;
Upon her thirsting lips I rain
A flood of kisses, and in vain;
Her lips inexorably close.

Through her closed lips that cling to mine,
Her hands that hold me and entwine
Her body that abandoned lies,
Rigid with sterile ecstasies,
A shiver knits her flesh to mine.

Life sucks into a mist remote
Her fainting lips, her throbbing throat;
Her lips that open to my lips,
And, hot against my finger-tips,
The pulses leaping in her throat.

January 18, 1894.

II. BENEDICTINE

The Benedictine scents and stains
The languor of your pallid lips ;
My kiss shall be a bee that sips
A fainting roseleaf flushed with rains.

I thirst, and yet my thirst increases
With draining deep and deeper kisses ;
The odour of your breath releases
Desires that dream of deeper blisses.

And on my lips your lips now pressed
Cling moist and close ; your lips begin
Devouringly to gather in
Your kisses that my lips possessed.

The odour of your breath releases
Wafts of intoxicating blisses ;
Yet still my thirst of you increases,
I thirst beneath your thirsty kisses.

No kisses more, this perilous day,
Or, tempting, tempt me not in vain :
This day I dare not taste again
Your lips that suck my soul away !
October 28, 1894.

III. DIAMONDS

Your diamonds on my finger glisten,
Still, in the dull, forsaken room;
Alone with thoughts of you, I listen
To the rain sobbing through the gloom.

But what soft wandering light is this
Comes flooding to a ruddier glow
The warm remembrances of bliss
Your diamonds on my finger know:

When, heart to heart, we lay and listened,
And, where the tedious gaslight rests,
Your diamonds on my finger glistened
In the white hollow of your breasts?

November 2, 1894.

IV. HANDS

Your hands cling softly, like a cat,
Whose loving little paws will pat
The loving hands caressing her ;
And like the velvet warmth of fur
Your soft and glowing palms compress
Desire into their daintiness.
Hold me, enfold me, let me rain
Roses of kisses on my chain ;
The throbbing of your finger-tips
Is rarer to me than your lips,
And your slow purpose pulse that beats
Against my mouth in heavier heats,
Dearer, almost, than the unrest
Of your dear, hesitating breast,
That calls me, and denies me part
In the suspensions of your heart.

November 14, 1894.

V. ESCALADE

Tenderly as a bee that sips,
Your kisses settle on my lips,
And your soft cheek begins to creep
Like the downy wing of Sleep
Along my cheek, and nestles smiling,
As if Love's truth were but beguiling,
Too utterly content to move,
Only to smile, only to love.

But if, to tease you, as I use,
I feign, unthankful, to refuse
Your dear caresses, and turn cold,
Then the shy lips, waxing bold,
Advance to vanquish my resistance,
And, with a passionate persistence,
Clinging closer, fold on fold,
They suck my lips into their hold.

And if, still feigning, I resist,
Fondly feigning to be kissed,
They wax still bolder, and begin
Hungrily to fasten in
Upon my neck, as they would gloat
On the protesting veins that tingle
As they and your deep kisses mingle,
Your kisses burning in my throat.

But ah! if, lastly, I should hear
Your sudden lips upon my ear
Set my brain buzzing, and my blood
Beating the measure of your mood,
And pouring over me and under
Scented billows of soft thunder,
I yield, I'll love you, but let be:
I yield, ere you quite murder me!

April 16, 1895.

VI. SLEEP

As if tired out with kisses,
Content to be at rest,
Here, on my breast
Her mouth, that ached with kisses,
Dropped to my shoulder, then she sighed
A little, smiled,
Then, like a happy child,
She fell asleep upon my breast.

Love comes and goes, and this is
(Love, that I once caressed !)
Love, like the rest,
And goes the ways of kisses.
Yet one hour lives, of all those hours that died,
When, like a child,
She turned to me, just smiled,
And fell asleep upon my breast.

January 17, 1895.

VII. PRESAGES

The piteousness of passing things
Haunts her beseeching eyes, the stir
Of those appealing lips, and stings
My senses, hungering for her,
With over-much delight, that brings
A presage of departing things.

I drink the odours of her hair
With lips that linger in her neck,
With lips athirst that wander where
Scarcely the rose of life can fleck
The whiteness of her bosom, bare
Beneath the fragrant veil of hair.

Death in her lilied whiteness lives,
The shadow of Death's eternal lust
After the delicate flesh that gives
The life of lilies to the dust.
Ah, if thy lust my love forgives,
Death, spare this whitest flesh that lives!

January 9, 1895.

VIII. MEMORY

As a perfume doth remain
In the folds where it hath lain,
So the thought of you, remaining
Deeply folded in my brain,
Will not leave me : all things leave me :
You remain.

Other thoughts may come and go,
Other moments I may know
That shall waft me, in their going,
As a breath blown to and fro
Fragrant memories : fragrant memories
Come and go.

Only thoughts of you remain
In my heart where they have lain,
Perfumed thoughts of you, remaining,
A hid sweetness, in my brain.
Others leave me : all things leave me :
You remain.

February 15, 1895.

IX. WINE OF CIRCE

Circe, the wine of Circe! Sorceress, I
Have lived, but can your magic bid me die?
I would die exquisitely, of the bliss
Of one intense, intolerable kiss.
Cease these caresses brimming at my lips,
While, fluttering, your magnetic finger-tips
Race in a maze of circles up my arm.
Silently, let your eyes begin their charm.
You lean above me, and you strain me close,
Pantingly close, against your breast: the rose
Of your lips reddens to a rose of fire,
That sinks and wavers, odorously, nigher.
And your breast beats upon me like a sea
Of warmth and perfume, ah! engulphing me
Into the softness of its waves that cover
My drowning senses amorously over.
Your eyes intoxicate me: deeper yet
Pour me oblivion! I shall soon forget
Earth holds another woman: let me drain,
Circe, the wine of Circe, once again!
The rose of fire descends, the stars of fire.
Bend from the night of heaven to my desire.
And your eyes burn on mine, and your lips burn
Like living fire through all my veins that yearn,
As, with one throb of rapt, surrendering breath,
Life dies into the ecstasy of Death.

March 14, 1895.

X. LIBER AMORIS

What's virtue, Bianca? Have we not
Agreed the word should be forgot,
That ours be every dear device
And all the subtleties of vice,
And, in diverse imaginings,
The savour of forbidden things,
So only that the obvious be
Too obvious for you and me,
And the one vulgar final act,
Remain an unadmitted fact?

And, surely, we were wise to waive
A gift we do not lose, but save.
What moments' reeling blaze of sense
Were rationally recompense
For all the ecstasies and all
The ardours demi-virginal?
Bianca, I tell you, no delights
Of long, free, unforbidden nights,
Have richlier filled and satisfied
The eager moments as they died,
Than your voluptuous pretence
Of unacquainted innocence,
Your clinging hands and closing lips
And eyes slow sinking to eclipse
And cool throat flushing to my kiss;
That sterile and mysterious bliss,

Mysterious, and yet to me
Deeper for that dubiety.

Once, but that time was long ago,
I loved good women, and to know
That lips my lips dared never touch
Could speak, in one warm smile, so much.
And it seemed infinitely sweet
To worship at a woman's feet,
And live on heavenly thoughts of her
Till earth itself grew heavenlier.
But that rapt mood, being fed on air,
Turned at the last to a despair,
And, for a body and soul like mine,
I found the angels' food too fine.
So the mood changed, and I began
To find that man is merely man,
Though women might be angels ; so,
I let the aspirations go,
And for a space I held it wise
To follow after certainties.
My heart forgot the ways of love,
No longer now my fancy wove
Into admitted ornament
Its spider's web of sentiment.
What my hands seized, that my hands held,
I followed as the blood compelled,
And finding that my brain found rest
On some unanalytic breast,
I was contented to discover
How easy 'tis to be a lover.

No sophistries to ravel out,
No devious martyrdoms of doubt,
Only the good firm flesh to hold,
The love well worth its weight in gold,
Love, sinking from the infinite,
Now just enough to last one night.
So the simplicity of flesh
Held me a moment in its mesh,
Till that too palled, and I began
To find that man was mostly man
In that, his will being sated, he
Wills ever new variety.
And then I found you, Bianca! Then
I found in you, I found again
That chance or will or fate had brought
The curiosity I sought.
Ambiguous child, whose life retires
Into the pulse of those desires
Of whose endured possession speaks
The passionate pallor of your cheeks;
Child, in whom neither good nor ill
Can sway your sick and swaying will,
Only the aching sense of sex
Wholly controls, and does perplex,
With dubious drifts scarce understood,
The shaken currents of your blood;
It is your ambiguity
That speaks to me and conquers me,
Your swooning heats of sensual bliss,
Under my hands, under my kiss,
And your strange reticences, strange

Concessions, your illusive change,
The strangeness of your smile, the faint
Corruption of your gaze, a saint
Such as Luini loved to paint.

What's virtue, Bianca? nay, indeed,
What's vice? for I at last am freed,
With you, of virtue and of vice:
I have discovered Paradise.
And Paradise is neither heaven,
Where the spirits of God are seven,
And the spirits of men burn pure,
Nor is it hell, where souls endure
An equal ecstasy of fire,
In like repletion of desire;
Nay, but a subtlier intense
Unsatisfied appeal of sense,
Ever desiring, ever near
The goal of all its hope and fear,
Ever a hair's-breadth from the goal.

So Bianca satisfies my soul.

December 10, 1894.

EPILOGUE : CREDO

Each, in himself, his hour to be and cease
Endures alone, yet few there be who dare,
Sole with themselves, their single burden bear,
All the long day until the night's release.

Yet, ere the night fall, and the shadows close,
This labour of himself is each man's lot ;
All a man hath, yet living, is forgot,
Himself he leaves behind him when he goes.

If he have any valiancy within,
If he have made his life his very own,
If he have loved and laboured, and have known
A strenuous virtue, and a strenuous sin ;

Then, being dead, his life was not all vain,
For he has saved what most desire to lose,
And he has chosen what the few must choose,
Since life, once lived, returns no more again.

For of our time we lose so large a part
In serious trifles, and so oft let slip
The wine of every moment, at the lip
Its moment, and the moment of the heart.

We are awake so little on the earth,
And we shall sleep so long, and rise so late,
If there is any knocking at that gate
Which is the gate of death, the gate of birth.

February 18, 1894.

AMORIS VICTIMA

AMORIS VICTIMA

I

He who has entered by this sorrow's door
Is neither dead nor living any more.
Nothing can touch me now, except the cold
Of whitening years that slowly make youth old;
Hunger, that makes the body faint; one thought
That ends all memory; for the future, nought.
My future ended yesterday; I have
Only a past, on this side of the grave.
For I have lost you, and you fill the whole
Of life now lost; and I have lost my soul,
Because I have no part or lot in things
That were to be immortal: grave-mould clings
About my very thoughts; and love's dead too.
All that I know of love I learnt of you.

March 1, 1896.

II

All that I know of love I learnt of you,
And I know all that lover ever knew,
Since, passionately loving to be loved,
The subtlety of your wise body moved
My senses to a curiosity,
And your wise heart adorned itself for me.
Did you not teach me how to love you, how
To win you, how to suffer for you now,

Since you have made, as long as life endures,
My very nerves, my very senses, yours ?
I suffer for you now with that same skill
Of self-consuming ecstasy, whose thrill
(May Death some day the thought of it remove !)
You gathered from the very hands of Love.

March 7, 1896.

III

Is it this weary and most constant heart,
Or only these unquiet nerves, that start
And tremble if I do but think of you ?
I know not, but I would to God I knew.
Had I not once a half-delicious grief,
When I believed in you against belief ?
But now, when I must doubt your word, your kiss,
When each remembered rapture murmurs " This
Was when she lied, and this was when she lied,"
Yet even doubt is by some doubt denied ;
Now, when the madness comes down like a flood,
Poisoning the honest currents of my blood,
Is it desire, love, or this madness, most
That aches in me, to know that you are lost ?

July 3, 1895.

IV

I know that you are lost to me, and yet
I will not think it. If I could but get

This too obsequious heart out of your power
For one forgetting and contracted hour,
This heart that from remembrance has not won
Oblivion or even rebellion!
I must not think: there's safety that one way.
I must not think of you, not even to say
"I have forgotten." I will think of—who?
All other women, since they are not you!
Ah! but that's weakness: can I not be strong,
As you are, in your rage to do me wrong?
Oh! lest I hate you, let my love have power,
For love's sake, to forget you for one hour!

July 6, 1895.

V

Love turns to hate, they say; and surely I
Have cause enough to hate you till I die.
Do you not hate me? must I not hate you?
Show me the way it's done, and I'll outdo
Your bravest. But what's this? If I surprise,
Not tears, in those inexorable eyes?
Ah! by those tears, think not that we shall bring
So dear a love to be an outcast thing.
Love turns to hate: I would it turned to hate!
We were not then so wholly desolate.
You will not let me love you; yet now, see,
If hate be not impossibility.
What shall we do, O God in heaven above,
Who cannot hate, and yet who may not love?

July 6, 1895.

VI

I cannot do without you : you have been
Too long my only slave, my only queen.
I cannot do without you : you have grown
Part of my flesh, and nearer than my own.
I need you ? Speak, be silent, frown or smile,
Only be with me for a little while,
And let your face and hands and hair be kissed,
And let me feel your fingers on my wrist.
I cannot do without you. Other men
Love, bid good-bye, and turn to love again ;
I only know I want you, only you,
Only because I want you. If you knew
How much I want you ! If you knew how much
I hunger, should I hunger, for your touch ?
July 8, 1895.

VII

Dare I remember, nay, can I forget,
(Would God I could forget them all, and yet
Thank God for this the most, I have not the power !)
Of all the hours of all our love one hour ?
It is my glory, as it is my curse,
(Loveliest, best loved out of the universe !)
To have loved, to have been beloved by you, above
All other loving women, made for love.
No woman ever loved me as you loved,
And now that you have from my brows removed

The heavy crown of love, and cast it down,
I cannot stoop to wear a lighter crown.
Having been crowned by you, I abdicate
Kingship, and join the beggars at your gate.

July 8, 1895.

VIII

In those mysterious jewels of your eyes,
Wrought with vain truths, and wrought with vainer lies,
When passion made me wizard, I have read,
And turned away, blind with exceeding dread.
I never knew you ; you could give your whole
Heart's life, but not the silence of your soul ;
I never knew you when you loved me most,
And now that you are that unquiet ghost,
Part of the very element of fire,
A breath, a flame, a shadow of desire,
I know that I shall never ravel out
The vision from the shadowy veils of doubt ;
For is it not the pure alone are wise
To read the wizard beryl of your eyes ?

July 12, 1895.

IX

I cannot work : I dare not sit alone.
There's not a corner here that has not known
Some moment of you, and your pictured eyes
Pursue me with relentless memories.

Here was the chair you sat in ; here we lay
Until your face grew fainter with the day,
And, in a veil of kisses, swooning white,
Fell back into the mystery of night.
'Twas here I kissed you first ; 'twas there you said,
" I love you," and, " Would God that I were dead ! "
And now, when you are gone for evermore,
I pace between the window and the door,
And, in the feverish folly of despair,
Stand listening for your step upon the stair.

July 17, 1895.

X

The white foam rushes back into the night
Of waters ; far behind, I see the light
Of ships that come from England ; and the sky
Blots out the world beyond. Would God that I
Could so blot out the past I hurry from
Into oblivion and a little foam,
And make for new horizons, as our ship
Sets forward, with the stars for fellowship !
O woman, am I not, for this one hour
Of triumphing waters, freer of your power ?
You, lost and left, with England, far behind
The spacious freedom of the sea and wind,
Is it not as a ghost you come to me
Across the wind and moonlight of the sea ?

Colchester, HARWICH–ANTWERP,
July 12, 1895.

XI

I have endured a week's oblivion
Of foreign faces, I have seen the dawn
Blush through veiled windows, and not vainly sought
Refuge from your intolerable thought.
Now, as I tread these London streets again,
There grows up softly, from the night and rain,
The same old ghostly haunting of your eyes;
And the old poisonous mist of memories
Rises about me, and the old desire
Quickens along my veins in sharper fire.
O! I am lost, you will not set me free,
Unless I turn again, and seek the sea,
Some vague new world of waters, bounded by
The soft and sudden barrier of the sky.

July 22, 1895.

XII

This is Love's ghost that I have met to-day.
These are the same eyes, and the voice that speaks
The very voice, and those the very cheeks;
And yet, O God! how faint, how far away!
Out of another world you come to me,
And hollow, hollow, hollow as the tomb
Sound the indifferent words that speak my doom;
And hollow, hollow, hollow, can it be
My voice that sounds so strangely in my ears?
You bid me speak, and I, in dumb despair,
Forgetting all my agonies of prayer,

Beckon to you across a mist of tears.
All's over now : I know that you are lost,
And love is dead, for I have met Love's ghost.
July 23, 1895.

XIII

And yet, there was a hunger in your eyes,
Once, when you turned upon me suddenly ;
And suddenly you turned away from me,
Once, when, evoking other memories,
I said, " You hate me : answer : do you not
Hate me ? " and in your silence then I heard
The ruined echo of another word,
Love, Love, that wailed and would not be forgot.
And once you laughed, that laugh I understand,
Sadder than tears, a broken little laugh,
As if a sob had shivered it in half.
And once, when, pausing, I had laid my hand
Upon your hand my hand could always thrill,
The fingers stirred : ah ! they remember still.
July 24, 1895.

XIV

The way of all transgressors is not hard,
As mine is. Other men have lightly sinned,
And joyously accepted their reward ;
And Memory, whistling as an idle wind,

Sang nothing in their ears to follow them
Down the despairing hollows of their nights ;
Yet something burns my heart out like a flame
If I but think on those foregone delights.
Why should I suffer, since I did the wrong ?
God knows that I repent not. Why should I
Suffer ? Take courage, feeble heart, be strong,
Poor heart that whimpers like a cur. O why,
In futile and dishonourable pain,
Moan on the grave of love that you have slain ?

July 29, 1895.

AMORIS EXSUL

I. MOONRISE.

I AM weary of living, and I long to rest
From the sorrowful and immense fatigue of love;
I have lived and loved with a seeking, passionate zest,
And weariness and defeat are the end thereof.

I have lived in vain, I have loved in vain, I have lost
In the game of Fate, and silently I retire;
I watch the moon rise over the sea, a ghost
Of burning noontides, pallid with spent desire.

DIEPPE, *August* 25, 1895.

II. LOSS

What have I lost in losing you?
Only the savour of all things.
In the same sky the same bird sings,
The same clouds darken in the blue;
Only, all's changed, in losing you!

In losing you, I lose the care
That held me fettered all my days;
I see before me bright new ways
That beckon me, I know not where;
And yet I do not greatly care.

For I have lost, in losing you,
Not you alone, but my own youth,
My hope in fame, my faith in truth,
And all I was to be and do,
And life itself, in losing you!

Dieppe, *August* 26, 1895.

III. IN THE BAY

The seagulls whiten and dip,
Crying their lonely cry,
At noon in the blue of the bay;
And I hear the slow oars drip,
As the fisherman's boat drifts by,
And the cuckoo calls from the hillside far away.

The white birds cry for the foam,
O white birds crying to me
The cry of my heart evermore,
By perilous seas to roam
To a shore far over the sea,
And I would that my ship went down within sight of the shore!

Fermain Bay, Guernsey,
May 17, 1896.

IV. THE RAT

Pain gnaws at my heart like a rat that gnaws at a beam
In the dusty dark of a ghost-frequented house ;
And I dream of the days forgotten, of love the dream,
The desire of her eyes unappeased, and the peace of her brows.

I can hear the old rat gnaw in the dark by night,
In the deep overshadowing dust that the years have cast ;
He gnaws at my heart that is empty of all delight,
He stirs the dust where the feet of my dreams had passed.

Dieppe, *June* 26, 1896.

V. IN THE FOREST OF ARQUES

Why am I haunted by your hands ?
O subtle and mesmeric palms,
That had the power of what ſtrange calms,
Only my ſpirit underſtands ;
And you, faint fingers thrilling through
With feverish ecſtasies ſubdued
Into the quiet of your mood,
Why is it that I dream of you ?

Exiled and outcaſt, and reſigned
To be forgotten, to forget,
Why is it there ſhould one regret
With one deſire poſſeſs my mind ?
That, in theſe unfamiliar lands,
After the exile and the change,
You might but ſoothe me with the ſtrange
Familiar comfort of your hands !

Arques, *September* 11, 1895.

VI. FORESHADOWINGS

It was your silence that I loved,
Musical pauses of a fine
Remoter harmony that moved
Across your spirit's boundary line.

Ah! in what visions have I heard,
Musical lips, eloquent eyes,
How many a song without a word,
Divine demands, subtle replies!

All that Love ever had to say
Your eyes have said to me, in vain.
Hopeless, estranged, unchanged, to-day
Without a word we meet again.

Dieppe, *September* 16, 1895.

VII. LOVE AND SLEEP

I HAVE laid sorrow to sleep,
Love sleeps.
She who oft made me weep
Now weeps.

I loved, and have forgot,
And yet
Love tells me she will not
Forget.

She it was bid me go;
Love goes
By what strange ways, ah! no
One knows.

Because I cease to weep,
She weeps.
Here by the sea in sleep,
Love sleeps.

DIEPPE, *August* 21, 1895.

VIII. TWILIGHT

The pale grey sea crawls stealthily
Up the pale lilac of the beach;
A bluer grey, the waters reach
To where the horizon ends the sea.

Flushed with a tinge of dusky rose,
The clouds, a twilit lavender,
Flood the low sky, and duskier
The mist comes flooding in, and flows

Into the twilight of the land,
And darkness, coming softly down,
Rustles across the fading sand
And folds its arms about the town.

Dieppe, *August* 22, 1895.

IX. REMEMBRANCE

It seems to me that very long ago,
Across a shining and dividing sea,
I dreamed of love, and the eternal woe,
And that desire which is eternity.

I did but dream that I have made you weep:
I never loved, and you have never wept;
The shining and dividing sea is deep,
And I am very tired of having slept.

Yet, in some hours of these oblivious days,
Suddenly, like a heart-throb, I recall
The passionate enigma of your face,
I take your hand, and I remember all.

Dieppe, *August* 22, 1895.

X. SLEEPLESS NIGHT

I CANNOT sleep, the slow hours steal
Lingering on a path of sighs ;
All night against my sight I feel
The presence of her lips, her eyes.

Out of the empty night appear
All I have loved and feared and fled :
Those eyes that I most love and fear,
Those lips I most desire and dread.

Her eyes are strange to me, they smile
An older alien smile, not mine ;
Her lips are laughing to beguile
My senses with a sorcerous wine.

Deep in the darkness of the night
She wavers to a fresh disguise ;
Yet still there burns against my sight
The radiant malice of her eyes.

December 25, 1894.

XI. ARQUES

I. NOON

The shadows of the rooks fly up the hill,
Up the green grass, and over the white wall;
The trees drowse in the sunlight; all is still;
Only the black rooks cry and call.

Out of the ruined castle, a slow crowd,
Their sultry wings against the sunlight beat;
They float across the valley like a cloud
Across the blue sky's cloudless heat.

Idly I watch them indolently fly,
And idly, like their wings, across my brain,
Drunken with sunlight, black-winged thoughts float by,
Pass, and return, and pass, and turn again.

II. AFTERNOON

Gently a little breeze begins to creep
Into the valley, and the sleeping trees
Are stirred, and breathe a little in their sleep,
And nod, half-wakened, to the breeze.

Cool little quiet shadows wander out
Across the fields, and dapple with dark trails
The snake-grey road coiled stealthily about
The green hill climbing from the vales.

And faintlier, in this cooler peace of things,
My brooding thoughts, a scattered flock grown few,
Withdrawn upon their melancholy wings,
Float farther off against the blue.

III. NIGHT

The darkness fills the hollows of the moat,
And rises up the valley, and comes down
From the low hills, and wicked white mists float
Like floods about the little town.

The night is all about me, crawling dark
Meshes the doubtful shadows of the way,
And all the woods and all the vales of Arques
Fade as the lamps put out the day.

Then in the darkness, face to face at last
With those winged thoughts that gather to their goal,
I feel their beaks and talons taking fast
Hold on my shivering soul.

ARQUES LA BATAILLE,
September 27, 1896.

XII. IN SAINT-JACQUES

Tired with the sunlight, her eyes close in prayer,
A little heap before a waxen saint;
Heaven above heaven, the starry hosts are there,
The wind of odorous wings, beating, breathes faint.

Ah, she is old, and the world's ways are rough,
She has grown old with sorrow, year by year;
She is alone: yet is it not enough
To be alone with God, as she is here?

Here, in the shadowy chapel, where I stand,
An alien at the door, and see within
Bent head and benediction of the hand,
And may not, though I long to, enter in.

Sightless, she sees the angels thronging her,
She sees descending on her from above
The Blessed Vision for her comforter;
But I can see no vision, only Love.

I have believed in Love, and Love's untrue:
Bid me believe, and bring me to your saint,
Woman! and let me come and kneel with you.
But I should see only the wax and paint.

Dieppe, *September* 8, 1895.

XIII. THE VILLA EMILIA (ARQUES)

Gates that I never entered, under the shadow of trees,
Gates with the garden discreet behind the wall,
Is it here, O garden discreet, is it here after all,
Here and behind your gates,
That the love of my life awaits
In a golden sleep the dawn of my coming, under the trees?

Under the quiet of trees the garden sleeps in the sun,
Sleeps, and awaits one day a wakening hand;
Is it I, O garden discreet, is it I shall stand
One day at the gate, and claim
Your princess in my name?
For she sleeps and awaits the appointed coming, sleeps in
the sun.

Gates that I never entered, gates of my villa of dreams,
Is there a princess at all that your shadows keep
For her lover, O garden discreet, in a golden sleep?
Ah, if behind your gates
Only a shadow awaits
The shadowy love that I lay at your portals, villa of dreams!

Dieppe, *September* 28, 1895.

XIV. THE WANDERERS

Wandering, ever wandering,
Their eyelids freshened with the wind of the sea
Blown up the cliffs at sunset, their cheeks cooled
With meditative shadows of hushed leaves
That have been drowsing in the woods all day,
And certain fires of sunrise in their eyes.

They wander, and the white roads under them
Crumble into fine dust behind their feet,
For they return not; life, a long white road,
Winds ever from the dark into the dark,
And they, as days, return not; they go on
For ever, with the travelling stars; the night
Curtains them, being wearied, and the dawn
Awakens them unwearied; they go on.
They know the winds of all the earth, they know
The dust of many highways, and the stones
Of cities set for landmarks on the road.
Theirs is the world, and all the glory of it,
Theirs, because they forego it, passing on
Into the freedom of the elements;
Wandering, ever wandering,
Because life holds not anything so good
As to be free of yesterday, and bound
Towards a new-born to-morrow; and they go
Into a world of unknown faces, where
It may be there are faces waiting them,

Faces of friendly ſtrangers, not the long
Intolerable monotony of friends.
The joy of earth is yours, O wanderers,
The only joy of the old earth, to wake.
As each new dawn is patiently renewed,
With foreheads fresh againſt a fresh young sky.
To be a little further on the road,
A little nearer somewhere, some few ſteps
Advanced into the future, and removed
By some few counted mileſtones from the paſt;
God gives you this good gift, the only gift
That God, being repentant, has to give.

Wanderers, you have the sunrise and the ſtars;
And we, beneath our comfortable roofs,
Lamplight, and daily fire upon the hearth,
And four walls of a prison, and sure food.
But God has given you freedom, wanderers!

DIEPPE, *September* 29, 1895.

I. ENVOI

All that remains for me,
In this world, after this,
Is, but to take a kiss
For what a kiss should be;

To stake one's heart to win,
Yet have no heart to lose:
Now I am free to choose,
Now, let the game begin!

If my hand shakes and swerves
A little as I play,
Well, such a yesterday
Was trying for one's nerves.

But I am wary, see!
I know the game at last.
I know the past is past,
And what remains for me:

To play a lighter stake,
Nor lay one's heart above,
And to have done with love
For ever, for your sake.

October 6, 1895.

II. WHY?

Why is it, since I know you now
As light as any wanton is,
And, knowing, need not wonder how
You work that wonder of your kiss,
Why is it, since I know you now,

Still, in some corner of my brain,
There clings a lost, last, lingering
Doubt of my doubts of you again,
A foolish, unforgetting thing,
Still, in some corner of my brain?

Is it because your lips are soft,
And warm your hands, and strange your eyes,
That I believe again the oft
Repeated, oft permitted lies,
Because your lips are warm and soft?

For what you are I know you now,
For what it means I know your kiss;
Yet, knowing, need one wonder how,
Beneath your kisses, how it is,
Knowing you, I believe you now?

October 30, 1895.

III. DISGUISES

I do not know you under this disguise :
I am degraded by your lips, your eyes.

O lips that I have kissed, as at God's feet,
I kiss you now, and you are only sweet,

O eyes where I have dwelt, as in a shrine,
Your shadowy incense is no longer mine.

Hands I have felt about my heart, I feel
Only your softness through my senses steal.

O rapture of lost days, all that remains
Is but this fever aching in my veins.

I do not know you under this disguise :
I am degraded by my memories.

April 24, 1896.

IV. VAIN MEMORY

THANK God, your memory's voice grows fainter, her face
pale,
She haunts my sight no more along the misty ways ;
Yet should young wandering joys beckon to me, she lays
Across the face of every joy a mournful veil.
I would but dance a measure lightly, and pass by,
I would but lay my head a moment on some breast ;
But as I reach out piteous hands for hope or rest
She glides between, and keen desire and sweet dreams die.
Her hands are cold as death, and death is in her eyes,
Chilled by the breath that kills the life in me she seems.
Her heart is dead that was a heart of many dreams,
My heart is dead that was a heart of many sighs.

December 10, 1895.

V. THE RETURN

A little hand is knocking at my heart,
And I have closed the door.
"I pray thee, for the love of God, depart:
Thou shalt come in no more."

"Open, for I am weary of the way.
The night is very black.
I have been wandering many a night and day.
Open. I have come back."

The little hand is knocking patiently;
I listen, dumb with pain.
"Wilt thou not open any more to me?
I have come back again."

"I will not open any more. Depart.
I, that once lived, am dead."
The hand that had been knocking at my heart
Was still. "And I?" she said.

There is no sound, save, in the winter air,
The sound of wind and rain.
All that I loved in all the world stands there,
And will not knock again.

August 5, 1895.

VI. THE BARREL-ORGAN

Enigmatical, tremulous,
Voice of the troubled wires,
What remembering desires
Wail to me, wandering thus
Up through the night with a cry,
Inarticulate, insane.
Out of the night of the street and the rain
Into the rain and the night of the sky?

Inarticulate voice of my heart,
Rusty, a worn-out thing,
Harsh with a broken string,
Mended, and pulled apart,
All the old tunes played through,
Fretted by hands that have played,
Tremulous voice that cries to me out of the shade,
The voice of my heart is crying in you.

December 30, 1895.

VII. THE RELAPSE

The agony of love has taken hold of me,
Again, the intolerable agony of love;
And what shall be, when all is done, the end thereof?
There shall be no more end unto this agony.
But all the roses Love has plucked shall blossom fire,
And all the lilies Love has watered waste with tears,
And ghosts that once were hopes walk in the night as fears,
And hoped-for peace be born a desolate desire.
I have been strong, and conquered love, and shall this be?
Shall I return, shall all that was be as it was?
I shall return, I shall return, alas! because
The agony of love has taken hold of me.

November 29, 1895.

VIII. THE DANCE

For the immortal moment of a passionate dance,
Surely our two souls rushed together and were one,
Once, in the beat of our winged feet in unison,
When, in the brief and flaming ardour of your glance,
The world withered away, vanishing into smoke ;
The world narrowed about us, and we heard the beat
As of the rushing winds encompassing our feet ;
In the blind heart of the winds, eternal silence woke,
And, cast adrift on our unchainable ecstasy,
Once, and once only, heart to heart, and soul to soul,
For an immortal moment we endured the whole
Rapture of intolerable immortality.

November 13, 1895.

IX. THE SILENCE

O voices of Love's silences
Exultant in my heart to-day,
You cry to me from far away,
Yet nearer than my heart to me,
Because the voice of silence is
The whisper of eternity.

A little while a little speech
Is ours to speak of mortal things,
But when the rustling of his wings
Betrays the immortal presence near,
What our hearts answer each to each
Only the silence dares to hear.

February 24, 1896.

X. THE BARGAIN

I CALLED upon your soul,
Once, and I named your name,
Once, and I bade your soul
Come, at my will's control,
Body and soul at your name,
Come: then you came.

For your soul you asked no price,
For your heart you asked but a loan;
Yet I paid for your soul the price
Of a living sacrifice,
Yet I lent for your heart no loan,
I gave you my own.

I call upon your name,
Now, and I claim your soul,
Still; for all time I claim
Body and soul in my name.
Have I not paid the whole
Price for your soul?

February 21, 1896.

XI. AFTER ROMEO AND JULIET

Love, where the summer night is ripe and odorous,
Flushed with the spilt wine of the golden-hearted stars,
Out of the garden's dusk and those funereal bars
I hear the voice of Romeo, Juliet calling us
Unto the marriage-grave of love's too keen delight;
And in the voice of Juliet I have heard the cry
(O heart, to put on passion's immortality!)
Of your wild heart to mine, under a winter night.
Out of the winter night a little light is born,
Yet still in shadowy ways our love goes wandering,
Our heavy-hearted pilgrim love, a way-worn thing,
Faint, though the sky is brightening to the breaking morn.

December 11, 1895.

XII. CHOPIN

O PASSIONATE music beating the troubled beat
I have heard in my heart, in the wind, in the passing of feet,
In the passing of dreams, when on heart-throbbing wings
they move;
O passionate music pallid with ghostly fears,
Chill with the coming of rain, the beginning of tears,
I come to you, fleeing you, finding you, fever of love!

When I am sleepless at night and I play through the night,
Lest I hear a voice, lest I see, appealing and white,
The face that never, in dreams or at dawn, departs,
Then it is, shuddering music my hands have played,
I find you, fleeing you, finding you, music, made
Of all passionate, wounded, capricious, consuming hearts.

February 25, 1896.

XIII. LOVE'S HATRED

I HAVE flung down a plummet in Hate's well :
I hate you worse than any words can tell.
With every little nerve I hate you so,
My body aches with it. I would have you go
A fiery way beyond the ultimate
Rim of the world, that I might feed my hate
With the long, slow, persistent following
Of that uncapturable, vanishing thing,
Your soul, to be a prey unto my hands.
I would be near you, do your least commands,
Serve you with every poison you desire ;
And of your torment in eternal fire
My soul would endure joyfully the whole :
Because I love you more than my own soul.

December 18, 1895.

XIV. THE DESTROYING ANGEL

She wanders through the city like a troubled ghost,
And where she passes her eyes light the lingering fire
Of a consuming, void, inexorable desire;
She passes, the Destroying Angel of Love's host.
Her heart is as a little loving woman's heart,
Her hands are full of pity, and of love her eyes;
Yet at her look there withers, at her touch there dies,
The lily of peace, love's flower that life has set apart.
Alluring, pale, she passes; and to her control
The kingdoms of men's strength are given; and none can trace
In the Destroying Angel's pale alluring face
A hungering heart, a silent proud appealing soul.

December 28, 1895.

XV. NEW YEAR'S EVE

We heard the bells of midnight burying the year;
Then the night poured its silent waters over us;
And then, in the vague darkness, faint and tremulous,
Time paused; then the night filled with sound; morning
was here.
Time paused; our hearts were silent; only your eyes burned
Out of the night as though lit to consume my heart.
The insane anger of love seized and became a part
Of your incarnate spirit; and your spirit yearned
In such an agonising ecstasy of desire
Unto my spirit waiting to be lost in you,
Spirit to spirit was fused in flame; and neither knew,
In that transfiguring ardency of perfect fire,
Body from body, spirit from spirit, life from death.
Only we knew, as flaming silence wrapt the past,
We had escaped the shadowy labyrinth at last;
Only we knew, as brooding silence, like the breath
Of the overshadowing wings of the creating Dove,
Descended on our hearts, and filled our hearts with peace,
Love, born to be immortal, until all time cease,
Was born of us anew, to be immortal love.

January 1, 1896.

XVI. THE PAUSE

Trouble has come upon us like a sudden cloud,
A sudden summer cloud with thunder in its wings.
There is an end for us of old familiar things
Now that this desolating voice has spoken aloud.
I look out on the world with blind eyes seeking you
In old familiar places where your feet have been.
I see a white face wavering, and all between
Mist, and I hear the sound of a voice sighing adieu!
Love was immortal yesterday: can love abate
One instant's ardour since to-day was yesterday?
Yesterday I was very sure of love: to-day
I look out on the world wonderingly, and wait.

January 31, 1896.

MUNDA VICTIMA

I

Henceforth for each of us remains the world.
The gates have closed behind us, we are hurled
From the fixed paradise of our content
Into an outer world of banishment,
And, in this anger of the garden's Lord,
His serene angel with the fiery sword
Has yet more pitilessly cast us forth,
You by the gate that looks upon the North
And I by the gate looking on the South.
And so the lamentations of your mouth
I shall not hear, nor tears for this distress
Water my hours' unwatered barrenness.
For love is ended, love that was to be
Endless ; nay, love endures perpetually,
But I shall never kiss your lips again,
Nor hold your hand, nor feel your arms enchain
Body and soul in one extreme embrace,
Nor find again the kingdom of your face.
For I have lost you, you return no more ;
And I have lost in you the years before
You gathered all my years within the glance
Of your supreme and triumphing countenance,
And all the years whose desultory flame
Shall yet smoke flickeringly after them.
Passion has burnt itself clean out for you ;
I go back empty-hearted, to renew

The unprofitable, the vain following
Of every vain, unprofitable thing ;
You, with all seemly wishes satisfied,
Go forth to be the most unhappy bride
The sun shall shine upon in rich men's halls.
Hearken, I hear a voice, a voice that calls ;
What shall remain for him ? sadly it cries :
Desolate years, eternal memories.
And what for her ? it cries, it cries with tears :
Eternal memories, desolate years.

II

If the astrologers speak truth, who tell
That the stars make for us our heaven and hell,
My passionate and perverse horoscope,
Where the intellectual forces may not cope
With Scorpio, Herschel, Venus, and the Moon,
Marked in my life that love in me should swoon
Into the arms of strange affinities.
It was myself looked at me with your eyes,
Where Venus and the Moon with Herschel strove
In some ambiguous paradox of love.
When first I touched your hand I felt the thrill
Knit heart to heart, and at the touch your will
Became as my will, and my will became
As your will, and an unappeasable flame
Was lighted when your lips and mine first met
In that long kiss my lips shall not forget
When I am aged with eternity.
I knew that my desire had come to me,

And that the world was ended and begun,
And I should never more beneath the sun
Go lightly forth on any wayfaring.
I knew that I should suffer for this thing,
For this completion of the impossible,
This mystical marriage of heaven and hell,
With anguish and with extreme agony,
Knowing that my desire had come to me.

III

I gaze upon your portrait in my hand.
And slowly, in a dream, I see you stand
Silent before me, with your pressing gaze
Of enigmatic calm, and all your face
Smiling with that ironical repose
Which is the weariness of one who knows.
Dare I divine, then, what your visage dreams,
So troubled and so strangely calm it seems ?
Consuming eyes consenting to confess
The extreme ardour of their heaviness,
The lassitude of passionate desires
Denied, pale smoke of unaccomplished fires ;
Ah ! in those shell-curved, purple eyelids bent
Towards some most dolorous accomplishment,
And in the painful patience of the mouth,
(A sundered fruit that waits, in a great drouth,
One draught of living water from the skies)
And in the carnal mystery of the eyes,
And in the burning pallor of the cheeks ;

Voice of the Flesh! this is the voice that speaks,
In agony of spirit, or in grief
Because desire dare not desire relief.

IV

I have known you, I have loved you, I have loſt.
Here in one woman I have found the hoſt
Of women, and the woman of all these
Who by her ſtrangeness had the power to please
The ſtrangeness of my difficult desires;
And here the only love that never tires
Even with the monotony of love.
It was your ſtrangeness I was amorous of,
Myſtery of variety, that, being known, yet does
Leave you ſtill infinitely various,
And leave me, thirſting ſtill, ſtill wondering
At your unknowable and disquieting
Certainty of a fixed uncertainty.
And thus I knew that you were made for me,
For I have always hated to be sure,
And there is nothing I could less endure
Than a fond woman whom I underſtood.
I never underſtood you: mood by mood
I watched you through your changes manifold,
As the ſtar-gazing shepherd from his fold
Watches the myriad changes of the moon.
Is not love's myſtery the supreme boon?
Ah rare, scarce hoped for, longed for, such a goal
As this moſt secret and alluring soul!
Your soul I never knew, I guessed at it,

A dim abode of what indefinite
And of what poisonous possibilities !
Your soul has been a terror to my eyes,
Even as my own soul haunts me, night and day,
With voices that I cannot drive away,
And visions that I scarce can see and live.
And you, from your own soul a fugitive,
Have you not fled, did not your pride disown
The coming of a soul so like your own,
Eyes that you fancied read you, yet but drew
Unknown affinities, yourself from you,
And hands that held your destiny, because
The power that held you in them, yours it was ?
Did you not hate me, did you not in vain
Avoid me and repel me and refrain ?
Was not our love fatal to you and me,
The rapture of a tragic ecstasy
Between disaster and disaster, given
A moment's space, to be a hell in heaven ?
Love, being love indeed, could be no less,
For us, than an immortal bitterness,
A blindness and a madness, and the wave
Of a great sea that breaks and is a grave.
Ah, more to us than many prosperous years,
So brief a rapture and so many tears ;
To have won, amid the tumults round about,
The shade of a great silence from the shout
Of the world's battles and the idle cry
Of those vain faiths for which men live and die !
And have we not tasted the very peace
So passionate an escape must needs release,

Being from the world so strangely set apart,
The inmost peace that is the whirlpool's heart?

V

Let me remember when you loved me best.
When the intolerable rage possessed
The spirit of your senses, and the breath
As of the rushing of the winds of death
Rapt you from earth, and in a fiery trance
Exalted your transfigured countenance
And bade your heart be rapturously still?
Or in the holy silence of that thrill
Which stirs the little heart of grass, and swings
The worlds upon their windy chariotings?
Or in the haunted trouble of those deep
Enchantments of your visionary sleep,
Ardent with dreams, and the delicious strife
Of phantoms passionate with waking life?
Or when, as a fond mother o'er her child,
You bent above me, and the mother smiled
Upon the man re-born to be her own,
Flesh of her very flesh, bone of her bone?
Of all your kisses which supremest one
Out of the immeasurable million?
Or which denied, as on a certain day
You tremulously turned your lips away,
And I, who wronged you, thinking you unkind,
Found it love's penance for a troubled mind,
Grieved it had done some little wrong to love?
Out of the silences which most did move

The eternal heart of silence, ancient peace?
Or did you love me best, and then increase
The best with better, till at last we stood,
As he who was love's laureate in each mood
Of passionate communion, bids us stand,
First among lovers when but hand in hand?

VI

It is all over, I am left alone.
O visiting ghost, these eyes have never known
So cold, calm, tearless, proud, dispassionate,
Desperate, desolate, importunate,
Whose wrong denied you life, and rent from me
Your love, to be this ghost of memory?
Not yours, though you have left me; and not mine,
Though I have bade you leave me: the divine
Right of the world's injustice, and that old
Tyranny of dumb, rooted things, which hold
The hearts of men in a hard bondage. Yet,
Not for the world's sake, let me not forget
That, in the world's eyes, I have done you wrong.
And since to the world's judgment must belong
The saving and damnation of all souls
Whom that usurped sovereignty controls,
Indeed I have done you wrong. I loved you more
Than your own soul. I had not loved before,
And love possessed me, fixed my wandering mind,
And drove me onward, heedless, deaf, and blind,
Wrapt in the fiery whirlwind, passion, drove
Life to annihilation upon love.

I had not loved before : I had been love's lord,
I had delicately feasted at the board
Where Folly's guests luxuriously admire
Each dainty waiting handmaiden desire ;
Where, when the feast is over, choice is free.
I had feasted long, I had chosen riotously,
Kisses, and roses, and warm scented wine,
I had bound my forehead with the tangled vine,
I had bound about my heart the tangled hair
Of laughing light loves ; I had found love fair,
Of delicate aspect, and free from guile,
And I had bartered kisses for a smile,
And my vine-wreath for poppies twined for sleep,
And of a sleepy bowl I had drunk deep,
And, dreaming, never dreamed that hearts could ache,
For over-much desire, or for love's sake.
And then you came. The rose of yesterday
Petal by petal drooped, withering away,
And all my bright flowers drooped, withering dead,
And the vine-wreath had fallen from my head,
And the wine-red poppies dripped to earth, and spilled
The bowl of sleep, and all the air was filled,
As with the fluttering voices of soft doves,
With lamentations of the little loves.
Then a new life was born of the last breath
Of that which never lived ; I knew that death
Which love is, ere it is eternity.
I knew that my desire had come to me,
And then I knew that love, I had thought so fair,
Is terrible of aspect, and heavy care
Follows the feet of love where'er he goes,

And lovers' hearts, because of many woes,
Ache sorer than all hearts most desolate,
And dearest love works most the work of hate.

VII

The world has taken you, the world has won.
In vain against the world's dominion
We fought the fight of love against the world.
For since about the tree of knowledge curled
The insidious snake, the snake's voice whispering
Has poisoned every fair and fruitful thing.
Did not the world's voice treacherously move
Even your fixed soul? Did you not hold our love
Guilty of its own ardour, and the immense
Sacrifice to its own omnipotence
A sacrilege and not a sacrifice?
Even in our love our love could not suffice
(Not the rapt silence whose warm wings abound
With all the holy plenitude of sound,
At love's most shadowy and hushed hour of day)
To keep the voices of the world away.
O subtle voices, luring from the dream
The dreamer, till love's very vision seem
The unruffled air that phantom feet have crossed
In the mute march of that processional host
Whose passing is the passing of the wind;
Avenging voices, hurrying behind
The souls that have escaped, and yet look back
Reluctantly along the flaming track;
O mighty voices of the world, I have heard

Between our heart-beats your reiterate word,
And I have felt our heart-beats slackening.

VIII

Love, to the world, is the forbidden thing ;
And rightly, for the world is to the strong,
And the world's honour and increase must belong
To the few mighty triumphing through hate
And to the many meek who humbly wait
The grudging wage of daily drudgery.
The world is made for hate, for apathy,
For labouring greed that mines the earth for gold,
And sweats to gather dust into its hold :
Is not the world bought for a little dust ?
Kingdoms are shaken from their ancient trust,
And kingdoms stablished upon treacheries ;
Under the temple-roof of the same skies
The stones of altars older than their gods
Are beaten down, and in the old abodes
The smoke of a new incense blinds the stars ;
The rind of the earth is eaten up by wars,
As a rat, gnawing, leaves a mouldering heap ;
And the world drowses in a downy sleep,
The world being sworn confederate with success.
Yet will it pardon the forgetfulness
Of laughing loves that linger but a night
In the soft perfumed chambers of delight.
How should it pardon love ? love whose intent
Is from the world to be in banishment,
Love that admits but fealty to one,

Love that is ever in rebellion.
The world is made for dutiful restraint.
Its martyrs are the lover and the saint,
All whom a fine and solitary rage
Urges on some ecstatic pilgrimage
In search of any Holy Sepulchre.
The lover is a lonely voyager
Over great seas and into lonely lands,
He speaks a tongue which no man understands,
Much given to silence, no good citizen,
His utmost joy to be apart from men,
For his creating mind has given birth,
God-like, to a new heaven and a new earth;
Where, if he dwell apart or in the crowd,
He talks with angels in a fiery cloud
Upon the mount of vision all his days.
Therefore the world, beholding in his face
Only the radiance of reflected light
Left by that incommunicable sight,
Which to the dim eyes of the world may seem
But the marsh-glimmer of a fevered dream,
Bids love renounce love, or be cast aside,
Has not the world's hate ever crucified,
From age to age, rejoicing in its loss,
Love on the same inevitable cross,
In every incarnation from above
Of the redeeming mystery of love?

IX

The world has taken you, the world has won,
Accursed be the world! Was it well done

To give the world, once more, its victory?
Was it well done to let you go from me?
For your own sake I suffered you to go:
Did I do right, for your sake? Say not no,
Say not that I have left you to your fate,
That I have made my own life desolate,
Casting adrift upon a shoreless tide,
While you, blind, shipwrecked, and without a guide,
Fasting and footsore, desolately went
Across an undiscovered continent.
Should I have held you fast, in spite of all?
Perchance. Yet it was well, whate'er befall,
To have renounced love, merely for love's sake.
Ah, when in lonely nights I lie awake,
And hear the windy voices of the rain,
At least I shall not hear your voice complain
"If you had loved me, you had let me go!"
Have we not loved and sorrowed? and we know
It is well to have loved and sorrowed and not striven,
And to endure hell, having passed through heaven,
To know what heaven is, having passed through hell.
Love's moment is a moment of farewell,
Sorrow and weariness are all our years,
And life is full of sighing, and much tears.

X

What shall your life be in the years to come?
The world, that recks not of love's martyrdom,
Shall praise in you a weary passionate face,
Where tears and memories have left their trace,

Into a finer beauty fashioning
Your beauty, ever an unquiet thing.
You shall have riches : jewels shall be brought
From the earth's ends to please a wandering thought,
And the red heart of rubies shall suspire
To kiss your fingers, and the inner fire
That wastes the diamond's imprisoned soul
Shall flame upon your brows, an aureole,
And your white breast shall be devoutly kissed
By the pale fasting lips of amethyst,
And the cold purity of pearls enmesh
Your throat that keeps my kisses in its flesh.
Your beauty shall be clothed in raiment fit
For the high privilege, to cover it ;
You shall be served ere any wish arise
With more than had seemed meet in your own eyes ;
You shall be shielded lest the sun should light
A rose too red on cheeks that blossom white ;
You shall be shielded from the wind that may
Tangle a tress delicately astray ;
You shall be fenced about with many friends ;
You shall be brought to many journeys' ends
By leisured stages ; what was mine of old
Shall now be yours, cities and skies of gold,
And golden waters, and the infinite
Renewal of the myriad-vested night.
Where cool stars tessellated the lagoon,
In Venice, under some old April moon,
Shall not some April, too, for you be lit
By the same moon that then wept over it ?
Shall you not drive beneath the boulevard trees

In that young Paris where I lived at ease?
And you shall see the women I have known,
Before your voice called me to be your own
Out of that delicate, pale, lilac air.
And all this you shall find, as I did, fair,
And all this you shall find, as now I find,
Withered as leaves a ruinous winter wind
Casts in the face of any summer's guest
Revisiting some valley of old rest.
You will remember me in all these things,
I shall go with you in your wanderings,
I shall be nearer to you, far away
Than he who holds you by him, night and day;
Close let him hold you, close: what can he do?
For am I not the heart that beats in you?
And if, at night, you hear beside your bed
The night's slow trampling hours with ceaseless tread
Bearing the haggard corpse of morning on,
You shall cry in vain for sleep's oblivion,
Haunted by that unsleeping memory
That wakes and watches with you ceaselessly.
What shall your life be? Loneliness, regret,
A weary face beside a hearthstone set,
A weary head upon a pillow laid
Heavier than sleep; pale lips that are afraid
Of some betraying smile, and eyes that keep
Their haunting memory strangled in its sleep.
"O mother!" is it I who hear you cry?
"O mother! mother!" is it only I?
"O my lost lover!" shall she not, even she,
Hear, and one moment pity you and me?

She must not hear, only the silence must
Share in the jealous keeping of that trust.
And when, perchance, telling some idle thing,
Your husband rests his finger on my ring;
When your eye rests upon the casket where
My letters keep the scent of days that were,
My verses keep the perfume that was yours,
And the key tells you how my love endures;
When you shall read of me, shall hear my name,
On idle lips, in idle praise or blame;
Ah, when the world, perhaps, some day shall cry
My name with a great shouting to the sky;
You must be silent, though your eyes, your cheek,
Will answer for your heart, you must not speak,
Though you would gladly dare a thousand harms
To cry "The joy of life was in his arms!"
Though you would give up all to cry one cry:
"I loved him, I shall love him till I die,
I am the man you tell of, he is I!"

XI

I write this for the world's eye, yet for one.
When she shall hear of me, and not alone,
Let her know always that my heart is hers,
As it was always. If my fancy errs
Into strange places, widely following
The flying track of any flitting thing,
If I recapture any cast aside
Garlands, or twine for roses that have died
Fresh roses, or bid flowers-soft arms entwine

My forehead flushed with some bewildering wine,
Then let her know that I am most forlorn,
There is no penance harder to be borne
Than, amid happy faces and the voice
Of revellers who in revelling rejoice,
To hear one's own sad heart keep time in vain
With some sad unforgotten old refrain.
For me, the world's eternal silence dwells
Not in the peace of those ecstatic cells
Where recollection goes the way of prayer
Into the void, the welcoming void air,
But here, in these bright crowds to be alone.
Then let her know that I am most her own!
Yet, if it might but save my soul from her
O come to me, Folly the Comforter,
Fling those wild arms around me, take my hand,
And lead me back to that once longed-for land,
Where it is always midnight, and the light
Of many tapers has burnt out the night,
And swift life finds no moment set apart
For rest, and the seclusion of the heart,
And the return of any yesterday.
Come to me, Folly, now, take me away;
I will be faithful to you until death
Puff out this wavering and unsteady breath.
Folly, the bride of such unhappy men
As I am, were you not my mistress, when,
Love having not yet chosen me to be proud,
I followed all the voices of the crowd?
But I forsook you: I return anew,
And for my bride I claim, I capture you.

Folly, I will be faithful to you now.
I will pluck all your roses for my brow,
And, with the thorns of ruined roses crowned,
I will drink every poison life has found
In the enchantments that your fingers brew.
Finally I commend myself to you,
Multitudinous senses : carry me
Upon your beating wings where I may see
The world and all the glory of the world
And bid my soul from lust to lust be hurled,
Endlessly, precipitously, on.
Only in you is there oblivion,
Multitudinous senses ; in your fire
I light and I exterminate desire.
Though it cry all night long, shall I not sleep
My sorrow in the fever of your sleep ?
Where, if no phantom with faint fingers pale
Beckon to me, wildly, across the veil
Of the dim waving of her sorcerous hair,
I may yet find your very peace, despair !
Benignant principalities and powers
Of evil, powers of the world's abysmal hours,
Take me and make me yours : I am yours : O take
The sacrifice of soul and body, break
The mould of this void spirit, scatter it
Into the vague and shoreless infinite,
Pour it upon the restless arrogant
Winds of tumultuous spaces ; grant, O grant
That the loosed sails of this determinate soul
Hurry it to disaster, and the goal
Of swiftest shipwreck ; that this soul descend

The unending depths until oblivion end
In self-oblivion, and at last be lost
Where never any other wandering ghost,
Voyaging from other worlds remembered not,
May find it and remind of things forgot.

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